Interview with William C. Trimble

The Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training Foreign Affairs Oral History Project

AMBASSADOR WILLIAM C. TRIMBLE

Interviewed by: Charles Stuart Kennedy

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Q: Mr. Ambassador, I wonder if you could give me something of your background. Where did you come from, just to know who you are?

TRIMBLE: Well, I was born in Baltimore, Maryland, the youngest child of five. My father died when I was eight months old. We were raised by my mother and raised also with those of her brother and his wife who drowned in a California flood in 1913 when we were in Europe. So she brought up not only five of us, but four of my first cousins. So it was a large family.

Q: Good heavens!

TRIMBLE: We didn't have a great deal of money, but she was able to put me through private school and college.

Q: Where did you go through school?

TRIMBLE: Gilman's School. Then I went to Princeton where I majored in history, fortunately was able to graduate cum laude. As my senior year was drawing to an end, I

hadn't decided what I was going to do. This was 1930. The Depression was just starting, and I had an offer of several jobs including one with an investment brokerage firm.

Q: It doesn't sound like a very encouraging profession.

TRIMBLE: The more I thought about that, the less I wanted to. So I happened to meet a classmate of mine who was planning to take the Foreign Service examinations. I met him on the train. He was going to Washington and I to Baltimore, Easter vacation in 1930. He showed me material on the Foreign Service, and I became interested. I went down to see a friend of ours, my family's, Ambassador Freeman Matthews, afterwards, who was then in Washington. He discussed it with me, and I decided to take the examinations.

I had hope of going to graduate school at Oxford or Cambridge and study for a master's degree in history with the idea of possibly teaching, but I could not ask my mother to pay for that. So to make a long story short, I decided to try for the Foreign Service. At that time, there were around 800 applicants, as I recall, for the Foreign Service examinations. They were held twice a year in Washington, and on some of the subjects I had little or no information, or knowledge, I had never studied economics in college. I knew nothing, really, about commercial geography. It was one of the subjects. I knew very little about bookkeeping, which was another.

Q: Really? Bookkeeping was one of them?

TRIMBLE: Yes. Also, I had little knowledge of Latin American history outside of our relations with Mexico. That had not been my field. And there were other subjects which I didn't know about for the examinations. And let's see, the examinations—well, I can't remember all of them. There was American history, European history since 1850, Far Eastern history since 1850, Latin American history since 1850, International Law, commercial geography, economics and finance, accounting and bookkeeping, languages,

of course, and various other subjects. So, as many others, I went to a tutoring school in Washington run by Mr. Crawford—

Q: What was his name?

TRIMBLE: Angus Crawford, in Georgetown, to study for the subjects I did not know, as was also true of my fellow students there.

Why did I decide to go into the Foreign Service? Eight of my class at Princeton, which was the largest of any class of any university or college ever before or since, did at the same time. Four of the eight became ambassadors. We were sort of idealistic. We wanted to do something for our country. Foreign Service sounded attractive. The Rogers Act had just gone into—well, it had been in effect for six years.

Q: The Rogers Act was in 1924, which was the act that amalgamated the consular—

TRIMBLE: Amalgamated into the Foreign Service the consular service and the diplomatic service. Before then, the diplomatic service, was generally composed of people of wealthy means. They weren't paid much, but they had the money to do this. Some of them were very good, and some of them weren't. That was also true of the consular branch but regarded by the former as poor relations. But, anyhow, the Act joined both together, which made a great deal of sense, and made a single career service, nonpolitical, completely nonpolitical, whereas some in the consular service had been political appointees as well as the diplomatic service before that. I don't mean just at chiefs of mission level but at the lower.

Q: Yes, I understand.

TRIMBLE: So I took my written examinations in January, 1931, two days of examinations, very hard. They were meant to be the most difficult of any for the government service at that time. And, fortunately, I passed them and then took an oral examination about three or

four months later. The Under Secretary of State was on our board, the Assistant Secretary for Administration, Wilbur J. Carr, and a representative of the Civil Service Commission.

Well, the upshot of it was that some 35 of us of the original 800 passed and were accepted. Economy pressure was on the State Department. It wouldn't take anybody who was married, because of the additional expense. You were sent out to your first post either in Canada or Mexico, whichever was closest. It cost less. But if you wanted to go to a foreign country, a European country or somewhere else, you had to pay your own travel over there, but the Department would pay your way back.

As I wanted very much to learn Spanish, and I did, I was assigned to Seville. My mother paid my trip over, which was the last time I took any money from my family. Those who had been accepted were given a large salary of $2,500 a year, no allowances. Fortunately in Seville we had a government-owned building which was made for the 1929 Exposition, but with living quarters. The idea was everyone that came in at that time had to go through consular practice work, and it made a great deal of sense. There was no talk about cones or anything like that, which is—

Q: I might add for the record, “cones” is the bureaucratic jargon for the major specialties within the Foreign Service: political, economic, administrative and consular.

TRIMBLE: That was put in many years later by a man who was Mr. Dulles' private assistant and who became assistant secretary of administration. The idea was in my opinion completely wrong, and the Service still suffers from it. We had to learn consular practice. That is shipping, invoices, notarials, accounts, trade letters, commercial reporting, welfare, helping Americans abroad, passports, visas, and so forth. And you learned a lot about human nature and dealing with people, particularly if you had had a rather limited knowledge of human nature as a college student.

Q: I think, and I come from more or less the same background, if you'd gone to a rather exclusive school, good college and then into the Foreign Service, you could be a pretty precious character.

TRIMBLE: Oh, we were. So it gave us an ability to get along with all sorts of people, drunks, seamen, who were bad news, some of them, crooks, all types, and welfare cases, I remember, and all of us had to do it. We didn't start with political reporting, economic reporting. You'd have to learn all of this, and it was very, very good training.

I remember one officer who was a little bit ahead of me, Ambassador Frances Willis. She was first assigned as I remember to Santiago to deal with shipping. When asked, “What would you do when a drunken sailor comes in and starts swearing at you?”,she said, “I'll learn a lot more words.”

But this was the idea and we all had to learn consular work. Then I went to what was called the Foreign Service School, which you had to go to for three months of further training, three months of study, in Washington. That was after over a year In Seville. Then the Depression was really on. Government employees worked one month without pay. So cutting down $2,500 by one-twelfth didn't leave much. Fortunately, I was home, so I could live with my family and my mother at that time. Then I was assigned to Buenos Aires.

Q: You talked about your group that came in. Here's the Depression. Things are happening in Europe, but America is pretty well focused on itself. Could you describe a bit how the young officers at that time—I mean, as you saw it—felt about the world and all? Because so much was concentrated on what was happening. The Roosevelt Administration had not come in yet. This was the end of the Hoover Administration.

TRIMBLE: Yes.

Q: So what sparked you? What was your attitude and those of the people with you, would you say?

TRIMBLE: We were all very dedicated, a deep sense of patriotism. We were worried about what was happening in our country. We wanted to do everything we could to make things better. This was also a period of isolationism, posts in Europe were mostly called “listening” posts, embassies and legations. We couldn't take any part in political or economic matters. The United States had played a major role in world affairs in WWI, but now it was isolationist and especially so as regards Europe.

Our policy towards Latin America was far less insular. There was great emphasis on building up the Americas, of our relations with Latin America and with Canada, of course, but no entangling alliances with Europe and all that type of thing, which goes back, of course, to George Washington. We were observers of what was happening. I think in the United Nations as well.

Q: The League of Nations, at that point.

TRIMBLE: The League of Nations, yes. And we were very concerned what was happening at home, and we didn't know too much. I had the Baltimore Sun sent to me by—it arrived three weeks late or four weeks late, but—

Q: This is when you were in Buenos Aires?

TRIMBLE: This was when I was in Spain and later at Vichy. In Buenos Aires, of course, there were some very good papers, Argentine papers, excellent ones as La Prensa and La Nation.

There my training in consular practice would continue in the Consulate General headed by Avra M. Warren.

Q: This is in Buenos Aires?

TRIMBLE: Buenos Aires. There were six or seven career vice consuls and a non-career one for administration. We didn't have a group of administrative people. The office was divided into sections. One was shipping and visas. One was passports, protection of American citizens, helping and that type of thing. Another was economic reporting, commercial reporting, particularly helping American trade. And we were shifted around from one to the other so as to gain experience in different fields. Then, towards the end of my tour—by this time I'd been married—

Q: Let's see, you were in Buenos Aires from 1932 to 1936.

TRIMBLE: From 1933 to '36.

Q: '33 to '36.

TRIMBLE: The last six months of my tour there, the Ambassador asked that I be transferred over to the Embassy, which meant a completely different type of job.

Q: That was Alexander—

TRIMBLE: Alexander Wilbourne Weddell. I had to learn something about the diplomatic side, political reporting, which we had not done in the Consulate General. Fortunately, since then, shortly afterwards, the Consulate General and the Embassy were joined together, thus ending the differentiation between the two that had existed in Buenos Aires. So for the remainder of my assignment in Argentina I worked for him, then I was transferred to Tallinn, Estonia.

Q: Can I talk to you a bit about Buenos Aires in 1932?

TRIMBLE: '33.

Q: I mean, that's '33 to '36. What were our principal interests in Argentina in that period, would you say?

TRIMBLE: Well, Argentina had recently had a revolution, a democratic form of government, a popular-elected government had fallen, and been replaced by a military dictatorship but it was just beginning to switch again to civilian control. Our interests were to encourage a return to a democratic system of government, a constitutional government; to further American trade which was faced with great competition by England; and to help American oil companies, for there was a state enterprise, the YPF, that made it hard for the American companies, so we tried to assist them as best we could.

There was a strong feeling of jealousy in Argentina, resentment against the “Colossus of the North” as we were called, because they aspired to be the great leader of Latin America, if not the whole hemisphere, much more so than Brazil. And there was also a feeling against the Americans, encouraged, I may say, also by the British because—

Q: Because the British had much influence there.

TRIMBLE: They had big influence in trade, and they owned the railroads and the—

Q: And many of the Argentine top leaders went to England to be educated.

TRIMBLE: Oh, yes. England or France. They didn't go to the United States. Very few went to the United States. So there was competition with the British, a great deal. Germany was not so much, because that was—Hitler had just come in and—

Q: And it was more Chile and other places.

TRIMBLE: Chile. But the Argentines, by and large, some of them aren't like this, but many of them resented us, at least at the government level. Fortunately, Mr. Hull came down for the Pan American Conference in Montevideo and did very well. He called on the heads

of other delegations rather than have them call on him as the senior foreign minister, and that helped a great deal. And then President Roosevelt went down there—that was shortly after I was transferred—and greatly impressed the Argentine Government and people.

Q: This was the Good Neighbor Policy, which—

TRIMBLE: It was the Good Neighbor Policy, which Mr. Welles had a great deal to do with, Sumner Welles. In other words, we were looking more in that period, more and more towards Latin America than towards Europe because of the isolationism, and we were making progress. Even in Mexico, the feeling of the Mexicans against the United States was understandable, rancor at what we had done in the past to Mexico, to take some of their land. But even our relations with Mexico were improving. We had had several good ambassadors sent there by President Hoover. And that was our whole emphasis. Most of our emphasis was Latin America.

Q: I'm just wondering, when you were in Argentina—I mean, obviously you were a young man there, sort of your first really diplomatic type of assignment as well as consular. But did you have any feeling—something that's always puzzled me—how did you feel at that time about the Argentines? Here they are, they've got a country that's full of wealth, all the best of—you might say, western culture has come in, the education, and yet the place doesn't work. I mean, even today—we're speaking of 1990—the place is practically falling apart. Why?

TRIMBLE: It's difficult to say. They were going ahead. They had very good school systems. They had brought some teachers from New England back in the 1880s, and several were still there when I was, but retired. They did much to further public education. Their universities were fairly good, but they majored particularly—everyone had to be a lawyer or an engineer. You have to have that title, one or the other. There wasn't as much in other fields.

Beginning in the 1880s a truly democratic system of government had developed, which was good, but then came the depression. And, well, the economic situation declined, the military took over. The military are not fitted to govern a country. The military is not equipped to run an economy. There was also a feeling—there was a class relationship. There were very, very wealthy people, there was a fairly large middle class and then a larger class of the peons, if you want to call them. They were people in the interior that had very little wealth, very little money. And there was a clash between these various groups. [Telephone Interruption] And they didn't pull together as a team. And there was a great sense of nationalism, waiving the flag and also, I would say, a feeling of resentment towards the United States and also, in a way, a resentment towards Brazil, which was a bigger country and, of course, Portuguese rather than Spanish.

Then a final factor was that there had been such large immigration into Argentina of diverse groups in a fairly limited period of time—I mean, 20, 30 years. There had always been the Spanish, of course. Then the Italians came in and a lot of English, Scots and Germans. And each group, they weren't assimilated at the time and they fell apart. The English people, some of them were even proud of the fact that they couldn't speak Spanish and had their own little, to use the German word “siedlung” for themselves. And the groups were still learning how to work together.

As the economy started to deteriorate, which it did, various revolutions took place and Argentina declined. And that is unfortunate because it is a wealthy country, a very wealthy country in agriculture. It has a great deal of oil, although deficient in other minerals, but a fine country. And the people are good, by and large. But they did not assimilate. It was too much of a melting pot in too short a period. That's one explanation I would suggest.

Q: Going on then, you went to Estonia to Tallinn. And I have you there from 1936 to '38. And that was a legation, wasn't it?

TRIMBLE: Yes.

Q: And when you first arrived, Arthur Bliss Lane was—

TRIMBLE: He was the minister to the three Baltic States.

Q: Where did he hang out?

TRIMBLE: He was in Riga. They are Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia, each different racially. Estonia was completely different from anything I'd experienced before. In Spain, I'd gotten there just after King Alfonso had been forced out in the 1931 Revolution, there was certain unrest, general strikes and so forth. My name was on a “lista de Purgatorio” as number 130 or so but only that of 17 or 18 had been shot by the time I left.

Q: Why was this?

TRIMBLE: A foreigner.

Q: A foreigner?

TRIMBLE: The far left and anarchists resented foreigners, and also we had executed Sacco and Vanzetti. But this is going back to my first post.

Q: But that's all right.

TRIMBLE: But returning to Estonia, it was a small country, still is, of course. It had been under the Swedes, Danes, again Swedes and then Russians, and got its independence in 1918 after fighting the Russians, and the Russians—the Soviet government was then starting—agreed to its independence in perpetuity.

There was no great wealth. There was no poverty. They were very patriotic and hard-working people, and they were doing very well for themselves. They had no oil, petroleum in that sense, so they developed shale oil. The shale oil production was sufficient for their oil requirements, gasoline and so forth. And they developed their lumbering industry to sell

pit props to England for the coal mines and pulp wood for paper. They even developed a candy industry to sell candy to the Woolworth stores, cheap candy. They did everything with what they had. They had their sugar beets, of course, and they were doing very well.

And it wasn't a dictatorship. It was a strong central government, because immediately after independence, about five, six, seven or eight different parties started and were fighting among themselves. So they established an autocratic form of government. But they were doing very well, and I enjoyed assignment there.

Q: What were you doing?

TRIMBLE: We were only two FSOs plus an American clerk and a couple of local employees. The Charg# d'affaires was rather ineffectual. He was retired afterwards. There was political reporting, efforts to reach a trade agreement as part of our country's trade agreements program.

By then we were allowed to do some political reporting—for isolationism was less than it had been in the '20s—economic reporting on resources, the country and its finances and so forth and also, of course, shipping, passports, protection and so on. And I liked the people. I had learned Spanish, of course. There I studied German and also drew on my French since you used French in the diplomatic corps.

But, anyhow, the Department apparently liked my work sufficiently so that in 1938, early in '38, it decided to pick some guinea pigs for advanced training in economics and finance. I think four of us were chosen. I was transferred back to this country for a year of study in those subjects at graduate school level. Meanwhile my wife, with our two children, would live here.

Q: Here in Baltimore.

TRIMBLE: Right here.

Q: Right here in Baltimore, outside of Baltimore.

TRIMBLE: At her parents' home. And as both Harvard and Chicago were rather far away, and I did want to be near my family, so I asked, and was sent to Princeton.

Q: Could I interrupt here? I'd like to go back to Estonia for one minute. Estonia sort of abuts on to East Prussia, doesn't it?

TRIMBLE: No, no.

Q: I mean, but it's close to East Prussia.

TRIMBLE: Well, it's north of East Prussia.

Q: North of East Prussia. So this period of '36 to '38, Hitler was certainly doing a lot of things in Germany. Were there concerns or were we watching or were there rumblings or reflections in what you were doing at that time?

TRIMBLE: Yes. But there was more of a feeling that—there was more antagonism towards Russia. The Estonians thought the Russians would attack them. There was also resentment against the Germans—a number of Germans, the Knights of the Sword had settled in the Baltic States—this is going back, of course, to the Middle Ages—and brought Christianity there. So there was a great deal of German influence, but they were very suspicious of Hitler. And the poor people, they thought, “Well, we're . . .

Q: You mean Stalin or Hitler?

TRIMBLE: Both. Particularly of Stalin. And so they had this rather forlorn feeling that “if anything happens, the British will come to help us,” which was, of course, unrealistic. But they did know what was happening in Russia as well as in Germany. They didn't like Hitler, and were very upset when he went into Austria, but really feared the USSR.

Q: The Anschluss, yes.

TRIMBLE: I can still hear the radio announcement. And they were worried that war was going to take place. As regards Russia, many of them spoke Russian, they had sources there including, I believe, a contact in the Politburo, and they knew what was happening in Russia pretty well, and that the Soviets wanted to create an incident which would enable them to come in and take over again. This was in '37 and when the purge was going on.

Q: This is the purge of the Soviet upper—well, most of the military officers were—

TRIMBLE: Military, intellectuals, government employees, even workers and peasants. I remember it very well. Let me see, it was February 24, 1937, which was the anniversary of Estonian independence. The Russians sent a delegation to attend the ceremony, a special one headed by a Marshal Yegorov, and with a group of security people. He was the guest of honor for the occasion. Well, the Estonians thought that something was being planned to happen, so they put him up in a hotel.

And the Russians said, “Well, you don't have to guard him because we have our own people to protect him.”

“Oh,” the Estonians replied, “no, he's our guest. No, we'll have our people right in the next rooms working with your people to doubly assure the safety of this Soviet hero.”

Of course, the plan was to have him assassinated by his own people and then blame the Estonians for it and give Russia an opportunity to retaliate. It was very interesting.

Q: Were you reporting on the Estonian attitude towards the Soviets at all?

TRIMBLE: Oh, yes, very much so.

Q: Were you getting any feedback of saying "Give us more"? Because we had recognized the Soviet Union, and we were developing a core of Russian experts. Were they coming through?

TRIMBLE: Unfortunately, we had a political appointee, Mr. Davies, who was pretty naive as ambassador, and felt everything happening in Russia was just fine.

Q: That was Joseph Davies.

TRIMBLE: Joseph Davies. But we had some very good officers: Chip Bohlen, whom I knew well; Tommy Thompson; Loy Henderson; Elbridge Durbrow, several others. They would sometimes come through Tallinn and we would discuss this situation. And in the Department we had a man named Kelly who was in charge of Soviet affairs and was very, very good. And, yes, we knew. We knew very well, and the reports were going through. There's no question about that. Whether they were listened to higher up is another matter. But we had the information.

Q: Well, then we'll move back to Princeton. You were at Princeton from '38 to '39.

TRIMBLE: Yes.

Q: Looking back on it, did this do much for you in the way of your later career, I mean, your professional knowledge and all, or not?

TRIMBLE: Yes, I think so as a whole. Unfortunately, graduate schools, not only Princeton but any of them, were not equipped to handle this special type of study we needed for the Foreign Service. I had an excellent course under Professor Kemmerer—we called him "Money Doctor" at that time—who was the author of "The ABC of Federal Reserve System." It was excellent. And a very good course on modern economics was given by another professor, Raymond Whittlesy, who was very fine. Again this was a time when interest in demography was increasing, and I studied under a man named Frank Notestein

who was probably the outstanding demographer in this country. So, yes, I learned a lot from that.

But one course I took, which was political theory going back in the 18th Century and its history didn't help me much in what I was trying to do. But I learned a lot about financial questions and economics as my knowledge of them had been largely gained in reporting from the field. This gave me the background and basis. Yes, it was a very good experience. I enjoyed it. But, I couldn't get a master's degree because you have to be there two years.

Q: Well, now, then you were really thrown into a hot spot. Could you tell where you went and what you were doing?

TRIMBLE: Because of my work in graduate school, the courses there in economics and finance, I was transferred to Paris.

Q: This was in 1939.

TRIMBLE: We arrived four weeks before war broke out.

Q: As I say, it's a vintage 1939.

TRIMBLE: Yes, it was. My wife and I went over leaving the children. We were hoping to get an apartment somewhere in Paris. Of course, they never got there. I was meant to be working on financial matters, but then when I got there, there was such a rush of people—immigrants, refugees, the German Jewish refugees wanting to get into the United States—that I was put on the visa desk, as also were several other officers. And we did that until war was declared.

Q: Could I ask you a question? Because this is really a very crucial part of American policy in this period. What was our attitude? I mean, you know, there you were on the visa desk,

and you had people trying to get out, particularly the Jews. And, of course, we know now what was waiting for those that didn't get out and that was the gas ovens for many.

TRIMBLE: We didn't know that.

Q: We didn't know it then.

TRIMBLE: No.

Q: And it's been claimed that the State Department was indifferent and all. What was your feeling? And what were your instructions at that time in dealing with that situation?

TRIMBLE: Well, we knew about Kristallnacht and having served in Europe. —

Q: Kristallnacht being—would you explain what it was?

TRIMBLE: Kristallnacht was when Hitler's Brownshirts attacked and burnt synagogues and broke the windows of Jewish stores in Germany. And that was the beginning, really, of the persecution of the Jews and the Jewish population in Germany. Many of them had gotten out mainly to France, but most of them remained in Germany.

Our job was do everything we could to help them get out. Immigration law was bent. Regulations were bent. For example, there used to be a provision of the law that said that skilled agriculturists had a preference. Jewish groups in this country formed a school in Paris where in three months refugees studied agriculture. Well, that school was a subterfuge and we knew it. But we overlooked that.

There was also an institution called the New School For Scientific Research in New York, and people would come to join it. I gave so many visas to so-called “professors” that I'm sure the number of people on the staff of the New School For Research was far greater than the number of students. Yes, we leaned over backwards. Indeed I was criticized

several times, by the Immigration Service for being overly lenient. And the rest of us were doing it, too. We were doing everything we could to get the refugees out.

Q: I come from a basic consular background, and often you get people at the top who get very consistent on the regulations within an embassy, but down below the vice consuls who are dealing with the problem, see what the problem is and do everything they can to help.

TRIMBLE: Yes.

Q: How about in the Embassy? Were you getting any sort of pressure from above, say, "What are you doing?" Or even from Washington?

TRIMBLE: Well, the Ambassador, Mr. Bullitt, William Bullitt, was very much in favor with what we were doing. Actually, he had Jewish blood, but that had nothing to do with it. But he believed strongly in what we were trying to do. He gave us all the support he could. Washington wouldn't tell us directly. But, yes, it was unwritten that you do all you can.

Q: You had that feeling?

TRIMBLE: And we twisted regulations. We really twisted regulations, and we got an awful lot of people out. And I'm sure it was done in other posts, too. Then war was declared.

Q: This was September 1, 1939.

TRIMBLE: Yes. By that time, we knew that war was coming. There was no question about that. People would come down from the Embassy in Berlin who told us about it, and we realized that the Ribbentrop-Molotov Agreement meant the Russians would not help the Allies. Yes, we knew that war was imminent.

And so the visa work practically ended for there were no more ships to carry refugees, except for those who got to go through Portugal and for a few to Holland. I then worked

on trying to get the American tourists out. And that was quite a job. There were thousands of American tourists. Practically no ships! How are we going to get them out? The Department arranged to have River Line boats sent over.

Q: Fall river-line boats? These were coastal cruisers.

TRIMBLE: Yes, but they put some planking on the side to make them a little bit more seaworthy. After all, it wasn't a bad season of the year for the passage to the U.S. A couple of American liners were still running, the Washington and Manhattan.

Q: What was this?

TRIMBLE: The U.S. Line ships, the Washington and Manhattan.

Q: Oh, yes.

TRIMBLE: But then the French issued a regulation that you had to have special visas to get out of the country, and the French red tape can be something. So I was put in charge of that work, getting people out, American tourists out. I was assisted by a young naval officer who had been over studying naval architecture in France, and a young Marine officer who had been attending some military school. We worked out a system to get them out—special trains, group exit, etc. And we did get them out, except for a few who refused to leave. But that's another matter. It was quite a job, and ships were awfully crowded.

Then came the “Sitzkreig” period.

Q: This was the so-called “phoney” war, the sitzkreig, the sitting war.

TRIMBLE: This was the winter of 1939-40 and the time of the Soviet attack on Finland. Next the Germans invaded Norway, followed by Denmark, Holland and Belgium and the war really heated up again. During that winter we had, under Washington's instructions, worked very hard to get all resident Americans, to leave, requiring that their passports be

validated to remain in France. Unless they had a very good reason, they had to go home. The reasons some gave to remain in France were really absurd. But we did get most American residents out. Unfortunately a few refused to leave.

Then came the invasion of France. In preparation for that period—we knew it might happen—the Embassy had been divided into two sections. In anticipation that Paris might be bombed or gassed and so forth, most of the Embassy personnel would move to southern France, and only a small staff remain in Paris. Actually things moved so fast that the two became three, one followed the French government to Bordeaux, one went to a place in southern France, and a nucleus remained in Paris. Since I knew some German —my wife spoke it quite well, but nevertheless was evacuated—I stayed on in Paris along with Bob Murphy and Ambassador Bullitt and not more than six or seven others. So I saw the Germans arrive, which was really pretty awesome.

Q: But to go back a little, did you see Ambassador Bullitt operating prior to the sort of collapse, the breakthrough and all, but before that?

TRIMBLE: I'd worked with Ambassador Bullitt. Some people criticize him. I know he had enemies. But he was very able, particularly for that job. He spoke French fluently, and he was a great speaker. I remember when we were doing visa work, he would come down almost every day and see how we were doing, hurrying us to get—Q: I might say this is quite interesting. I speak as a consular officer. It's usually a cold day in hell when an ambassador gets close to a visa line, even in a case of emergency.

TRIMBLE: Oh, he did. He was very good at that. However he and Sumner Welles did not get along well together. That was one of the difficulties we had. Welles was Under Secretary when he was there and a great friend of President Roosevelt. I never knew all the inside details. That wasn't my business. But I thought he was a very good ambassador.

Q: Looking at this as things developed, what was the Embassy doing during, say, this period outside of the visa issue, during the sitzkreig? I mean, were we going out?

TRIMBLE: We had to get Americans out.

Q: So really we were concerned with day-to-day immediate operations, not looking at the greater picture or something. You were just busy.

TRIMBLE: I was not in the political side of it, you know. I was assigned to the Embassy for financial and economic work. And trying to get Americans out, that was my big job after the immigration stopped, and then doing economic financial reporting as well. Reporting on political matters was done by others. Except I do know when the Germans finally arrived, just before they arrived, we had to burn all the archives. In those days in the Foreign Service reports or dispatches were always bound in books. Well, to take those damn bindings off, and put them in the furnace was quite an operation. But we did it and burned all the codes. The process left the Place de la Concorde covered with ashes.

Q: Well, how did we feel? I mean, after all, we were not at war at the time. How did you all feel?

TRIMBLE: We were probably going to war. I certainly did and I remember telling Mr. Bullitt that having been in the ROTC at college and given a 2nd Lieutenant's commission in the Reserve, I felt I should rejoin my unit in Maryland.

This was in 1940, early 1940. He said, “I think you're more useful to your country as a consul in Paris than you would be a second lieutenant, field artillery, horse-drawn reserve division in Maryland,” which was quite true. But we all felt that way. We knew it was going to happen.

Q: In the Foreign Service the feeling was, “It's coming!”

TRIMBLE: Oh, yes. Oh, yes. There's no question about it. At least, it certainly was in Paris and I should think elsewhere, too. Yes, we knew we would enter the war. But we didn't know when. Isolation was so strong. After all Senator Borah, who was chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee of the Senate, said there won't be a war and if there was one, we must stay out. But we in the field knew that the war was coming, and also believed that we would get in it sooner or later.

Q: Well, now, then we come to the point, if you would describe, please, how you felt and what you saw when the Germans came in and how the Embassy reacted at that point.

TRIMBLE: Only a skeleton staff was left. Beforehand, we had seen the poor refugees from Holland, particularly Belgium, passing through. It was a pathetic sight. These poor people pushing baby carriages, dogs running around, and then, of course, French refugees from the north. There's nothing we could do for them. The Norwegians, I will say, had it organized—although Norway had already been occupied. The Norwegians in Paris organized soup kitchens, and that helped. However, the French government was not prepared for it.

And so then after the Germans came, or just before the Germans came, the Embassy took over interests, foreign interests, of England, Belgium, Canada, Egypt, one or two other countries, which meant that I was given that job in addition to the financial matters. We put up signs in German, English and French, “This building, is under the protection of the United States of America.” We put them on every apartment, every house where staff members of those diplomatic missions had lived.

I also arranged to have all the furniture and belongings of U.K. staff members moved to the British Embassy. We had truckloads, horse-drawn vehicles, bring the stuff in. When Goering wanted to take over the British Embassy as his headquarters, it was full of furniture. The British said when they went back after Paris was liberated, the floors were falling in. [Laughter] It was one of those funny situations.

Let's see, what was I talking about—oh, yes—getting the Americans out and the Germans came in, and they tried to—Mr. Bullitt felt strongly that an American ambassador or an American minister always remained in Paris at the time of the French Revolution, the Napoleonic wars and—

Q: Particularly during the commune and all that. The famous thing during the siege of Paris.

TRIMBLE: Yes, during the War of 1870 and aftermath.

Q: The Ambassador stayed on.

TRIMBLE: The American Ambassador must stay there, which he did. He was later recalled when the French government was established in Vichy and Bob Murphy was temporarily in charge. So we got nearly all of the Americans out and we helped the British and other foreigners to do so.

Just before the Germans arrived, I remember, Italy entered the war and kicked all the English out of Italy, civilians, officials, etc. and they all came in trains to France. This was just in early June—Paris fell on June 14, 1940, and this was about a week before. Those poor English people didn't know what to do. They couldn't speak French, and the British Embassy had gone, the Consulate had gone and we must look after them. Just before leaving, the Consul informed me that arrangements had been made for special trains to take them from Paris to Brest and thence by boat to England. Most managed to find their way to the Consulate where I instructed them to go to the Gare de l'Ouest. There I found thousands of people milling around the station including several hundreds of English. One was standing on top a pissoir holding an umbrella shouting “Britishers here!” [Laughter]

And then when I went inside to see the Station master, he said, “All trains are stopped. The Germans are Stuka-bombing all the trains.”Q: Stuka being a type of dive-bomber.

TRIMBLE: Yes. So it was pretty awful, these poor people. But they finally got out somehow or other.

Q: Were you there when the Germans came to our Embassy?

TRIMBLE: Absolutely.

Q: This was a rather tricky period. We didn't quite know what was going to happen.

TRIMBLE: Well, the 13th of June, I think it was, Paris was declared an open city. The French government was gone. The Germans were outside, hadn't come in. They were waiting to come in the next day. They were shaving and getting their uniforms pressed to make a great impression, which they did, on the population.

Mr. Bullitt thought there would be rioting in the streets, so he made all of us—his small staff—spend the night in the Embassy. My room, where I had a cot, faced on the Pl#ce de la Concorde. It was a beautiful night. I remember the stars and moon shining, and we all were upset, of course. I looked about 4:00 in the morning, 5:00 maybe, because the sun was coming up, and you could see German helmets behind the bec-de-gas, the street lights, in the Pl#ce and then more poured in, hundreds and hundreds filling the entire square.

We had heard the German soldiers were in pretty poor shape physically because of malnutrition after the First World War. They weren't. They were well-fed and husky, tough-looking and able. No question about it. And they poured in all that day. And then afterward came the reserve groups, the German reserves, and they were rather older men who composed a military garrison. But they were also able and almost as well disciplined. We also saw many of the fifth column people who had been paid by the Germans.

Q: These are the French.

TRIMBLE: French. And, of course, many of them were Communists, because Germany and Russia had reached an agreement in 1939, and the Communist Party in France had helped the Nazis. There's no question about that. It was pretty awful.

Q: In the first place, were you around when the first meeting between somebody official from the German side and—

TRIMBLE: Yes. Mr. Bullitt left shortly thereafter on instructions from Washington. He was told to get out. Bob Murphy was left in charge, and he spoke German quite well—he was Ambassador Murphy afterwards. He met with the Germans, and they wanted to take over the British Embassy. We stopped them. I remember seeing one German soldier putting up a telephone line on the—tying it on to the gates of our Embassy running over to the hotel next door where they had their headquarters. We stopped that, of course, but we had to deal with the Germans.

I had to—that's another long story. I had to deal with one German who was an officer in the German Army intelligence service, who had been a Rhodes Scholar after WWI. He spoke excellent English, but claimed to hate the British because of his experience there. However, he was in charge of dealing with all the British still in Paris and all the Americans, a nasty little type, but he had lots of guts. On returning to Paris in 1949, I found out that he'd been a British agent the whole time! His mother had been part Jewish. He was actually very anti-Nazi, secretly working the whole time for the British until finally caught and shot. In my mind he was a nasty person but tough and very able. We saw all sorts of strange things like that.

But then France had surrendered. The government at Bordeaux had been forced to agree to a demarcation between north and south. Germans occupied all the northern part of France and the coastal area on the Southwest. The capital was moved to Vichy with Marshal P#tain as Head of State. There, as you know, we had a small Embassy.

Q: At Vichy, yes?

TRIMBLE: Yes, Vichy. I remained in Paris until September, 1940 and then transferred to the Embassy at Vichy.

Q: Well, during this period of time from June 14th until September what were you doing in our sort of "rump" Embassy in Paris?

TRIMBLE: I was trying to do whatever I could on financial reporting, which was my job. The Germans were flooding the country with their occupation Marks with bad effects on the economy—a recourse to barter, black marketing, etc. As the codes had been destroyed, we had to rely on couriers to get reports out. Once in a while one would come down from Germany, and he'd carry the pouch back to Berlin and from there forward it on. But it was hard communicating with Washington, very difficult. So much of my work was helping such Americans that still remained to get out some how or other, and protection of foreign interests, seeing that the Germans did not steal—which they did—things.

Oh, there's one more story which I'd forgotten. Well, four days before the Germans arrived, the French Minister of Finance, urgently called concerning the French gold reserves. They had been shipped to Casablanca, and the Government wanted them carried by an American ship, the USS Pittsburgh, to the United States.

Q: The American naval cruiser.

TRIMBLE: Well, so Bob Murphy, and I together with an American secretary went to the Ministry to draw up the transfer document in both French and English. As you know, in French, where we put a period, $1,000.75, they put a comma instead of that. And when we put a comma, $10,000, they'd put a period, and more trouble over that. [Laughter]

Q: Oh, yes. Because we're talking about millions and millions of dollars worth of gold there, and you have to get it just right.

TRIMBLE: And it was really something. All this back and forth, “How are we going to reconcile this in a legal document?” But we finally did, and the gold arrived in the U.S.

Q: Robert Murphy, of course, was one of the great figures in American diplomacy in this period, and you were working with him. How did you see him operating, and what sort of a person was he to work with?

TRIMBLE: He had great charm, very Irish charm, very able, people liked him, a very smooth operator, and intelligent. He was very—I wouldn't say he was an intellectual type. I don't think he was as bright as Mr. Bullitt, but he had more stability than Mr. Bullitt who was emotional, and Bob Murphy wasn't. He was a very, very able officer.

There's one nice story about Bob Murphy. He had been consul in Munich before the war, just the time when Hitler was coming on the scene. And one of his great friends was the Papal Nuncio. Do you know this story?

Q: No, I don't know the story, but I know the Papal Nuncio because he later became Pius XII.

TRIMBLE: That's right. One day when they were meeting together Bob said, “I'm worried about this man, Hitler, and what he may do” to which the Nuncio replied, “it's nothing, just one of those passing things.” When many years later, Bob asked his old friend, “How about that?” to which the Pope responded, “Well then I didn't have papal infallibility.” [Laughter]

Q: Well, then how did Murphy deal with the Germans?

TRIMBLE: He spoke German well. Yes, and he stood up for our rights, everything, and they respected him. At that period, yes, he was very good with them. Later he was assigned to Vichy and then to Washington, but returned on a short visit in the Spring of 1941. By then Admiral Leahy had been appointed Ambassador there, an excellent choice.

Q: There was North Africa.

TRIMBLE: That came afterwards.

Q: Yes.

TRIMBLE: That was back in—

[Tape Recorder Turned Off]

Q: Well, anyway, to return then, how did he deal with the Germans? I mean, what was the relationship with the Germans?

TRIMBLE: Bob Murphy?

Q: Yes.

TRIMBLE: At what time?

Q: After they came in. Was it sort of a very standoffish situation?

TRIMBLE: No, because Bob was not that type of person. He stood up for our rights and made sure the Germans respected our rights as neutral. But he wasn't antagonistic. He said, in a sense, “You can't do this!” He'd tell them very firmly what our situation was, and they had to acknowledge, and they did, by and large. But then he was moved shortly afterwards down to Vichy. And so just a small group of us remained, a skeleton force.

Q: And what did you do then? I mean, again, I'm interested in this relationship with the Germans.

TRIMBLE: Since I had to handle the British interests and Americans living there, I had to deal with this one German, as I told you.

Q: The nasty type.

TRIMBLE: Yes.

Q: Who was a secret agent.

TRIMBLE: A fellow whose name—

Q: You can fill it in later, because you'll get a transcript.

TRIMBLE: I can't remember his name. I have it in notes somewhere. [Rostin] I had to deal with him when the Germans would try to arrest the Americans for alleged spying or some other charge. And that took a lot of time. Then also seeing that they respected buildings under our protection, homes of people, and did not interfere with the movements of household effects to the British Embassy, and so on. So it was a standoffish type of thing, but I had to deal with him, because we were neutral, and he was responsible for matters concerning American civilians and British civilians. And, as I said, tough as hell.

Also I was doing what financial reporting I could, what was happening to the French finances as we saw it in Paris and with the Germans flooding the market with their occupation marks.

Q: Wasn't this a peculiar thing, because this was an Embassy sitting where an ambassador and all had moved, the French government had left there. You must have felt that you were dealing on borrowed time.

TRIMBLE: We were, in a sense, but we kept on. Actually, the Embassy remained on until Pearl Harbor. We kept it on an even smaller staff but then it was interned, of course.

Q: Well, you were transferred down to Vichy.

TRIMBLE: To Vichy.

Q: What were you doing down in Vichy and what was the situation there?

TRIMBLE: Doc Matthews, H. Freeman Matthews, was the Charg#. Bob Murphy had already left for Washington and Mr. Bullitt had resigned. It was a very small Embassy. We had a military attach# and a naval attach# in Paris, and, let's see, three 3rd Secretaries—Douglas MacArthur, Woodruff Wallner and me, and a couple of American clerks. We had cable communications and a code room and thus sent and received messages in code with Washington.

Doug and Wallner worked with Doc Matthews on political matters. Mine were largely financial and economic. I dealt with representatives of the Bank of France and Ministry of Finance and was able to work out an arrangement to help the British civilians living in southern France. The French owed the British quite a bit of money from the period where they were fighting together before the fall of France. So to pay that off an arrangement was worked out that the French would give me so much, transfer to me so much—or rather to the Embassy—a sum of money, hundreds of thousands of francs, of which, in turn, went through the Consulate General in Marseille and Lyon Consulate to provide a small monthly stipend to each English subject.

And then we tried to work—I worked very hard with Ted Achilles, who was then the third secretary in London, through cable, to have a ship come over from England which would take back to France a number of the French soldiers who had been evacuated from Dunkerque, and wanted to come home—France was then out of the war—and return with British who were stuck in France. We had to get permission, of course, clearance for the ship from the Germans, the Italians, the British and so forth.

We finally worked the thing out. It was called Djenne. But then the British didn't want to leave. I remember once I got so angry when one of them said: “Well, can we have—we always play bridge together—our friends in the next cabin?” Another said: “I don't want

to go back to England. It's cold, and I'm used to living in Italy and so I must have a warm climate. If you get me down to South Africa it would be different."

Q: Wasn't P.G. Wodehouse one of those then?

TRIMBLE: If he was one, I don't remember him. It was the darndest. Anyway, the French came back, but very few British went home.

Again on the subject of foreign interests protection, a number of British soldiers had been hidden in northern France after Dunkerque and in French peasant homes. The French underground was very, very good. It smuggled many out across the demarcation line, which was the line between where the French Vichy government controlled and the Germans occupied zone, and some came to the Embassy for help. As they were not civilians, all I could do was give them enough francs to reach an internment camp the French had set up for British soldiers who had managed to escape to unoccupied France and where under the terms of the Armistice Agreement to be held until the end of the war. The site chosen happened to be on the coast near Marseille, and it also happened that the guarding was relaxed on nights when a British submarine would anchor offshore. [Laughter] So it was quite a transient camp.

Most of the people in the French government—not most, I won't say most, but the ones I was working with, were pro-British or rather very anti-German, I'll put it that way. What they would do in the daytime was something different at night. And there was some fascinating stories.

I remember one time we received a note from the Papal Nuncio in Vichy that he had been called on for assistance by a young Canadian student seminarian and since we had Canadian interests under our protection, would we handle the matter. So I arranged to receive him. He was dressed in a soutane, one of those flat hats worn by French priests, black shoes with buckles on the top and having a tonsure. And he was obviously Canadian which I could tell from his accent which was French-Canadian, not French. He said that he

had been in Paris and studying at a seminary when the war broke out and then after the Germans came they said, “You get out. You're non-combatant. We don't want to feed you here. Go south.” So he came to Vichy, and went to the Papal Nuncio who told him to see us. Under questioning, however, I found he was actually a Canadian Army officer who had been hidden by a French family in northern France. He later had gotten to Paris where the French equivalent of our Army's G2 had provided him with priest's clothing to get into the unoccupied zone. He had also fooled the Nuncio. The French can be very clever.

Q: I think Canada should be spelled out, that here we were, we were neutral, but we were doing everything we could. I mean, there was no doubt in our minds of not trying to help the British at that point.

TRIMBLE: We were anti-German, but after all this country was still neutral. The President knew that we would probably get into war, but the Congress didn't want us to get entangled. We had gotten into the First World War and we mustn't do so again was a strong neutrality feeling in this country. So we were—

Q: But within the Embassy in Vichy, I mean, you knew what we were supposed to do and you were doing it.

TRIMBLE: We did a lot of things we shouldn't have done.

Q: But this is almost instinctive then?

TRIMBLE: Surreptitiously, yes. Instinctively, I suppose. Yet we felt that the people in the Department knew, what we were doing and the President also knew. But we had to do it very carefully.

Then I had another kind of job. The Red Cross was sending over some shiploads of wheat flour to be given free to French school children because of malnutrition. It was pretty bad. The Red Cross representative sent to arrange the details was a nice fellow, but he couldn't

speak French, so I worked with him. And the French ministry with whom we dealt said: “How were we going to fit this free wheat flour for children alone into our bread rationing system? Maybe you shouldn't send it at all.” You know, the bureaucratic attitude, “You can't do this! It's against the regulations.” Well, we got it all worked out. But it was quite a lot of work.

At times I would go to see the former governor of the Bank of France, Jacques Rueff, who was Jewish or half Jewish, I think, and while retired or forced out of the Bank was living in southern France under the protection of Marshal P#tain for his wife had been Mme. P#tain's goddaughter. We would discuss financial matters, and I would tell him about news not reported in the controlled press. A very good man as were many in the Foreign Ministry, younger officers, I knew and in the Finance and Agriculture Ministries. Very anti-Hitler, very patriotic and some pro-British.

Q: Well, at that time, de Gaulle was not much of a figure, was he?

TRIMBLE: He was broadcasting, but he hadn't been, no. There was the feeling in France at the time of pouriture, meaning rottenness, that that had caused France's defeat. It had been rotten in the Popular Front Governments of the 1930s and further weakened by pacifism and Communist infiltration. But the military, by and large, were very French—not pro-English but anti-German.

Q: I suppose the French Navy was, of course, always anti-British.

TRIMBLE: Yes. And Admiral Darlan was very anti. He was jealous. That's traditional of the French Navy.

Speaking of that inspires an interesting story. The French before the Second World War had developed naval architecture to a very high degree. The British had many ships, but the French hadn't, and so were able to concentrate on a few. The Jean-Bart was one of them.

Q: Yes. As a battleship, the Richelieu.

TRIMBLE: Yes, the Richelieu and Jean-Bart.

Q: Dunkerque.

TRIMBLE: And they were very advanced in naval architecture. As I mentioned earlier, one of the young officers who helped me in 1939 had been a student of the subject in Paris. Well, in early 1941 the French Navy Ministry in Paris gave to our naval attach#, Hillencotter, who became afterwards head of the CIA—

Q: Hillencotter, Roscoe Hillencotter.

TRIMBLE: Gave him 10 or 15 large bags of blueprints for the Jean-Bart which, of course, was completely against the armistice terms.

Q: Oh, yes. Yes.

TRIMBLE: We were able to get them down—I never knew exactly how—from Paris to Vichy: It was all very secret. There Doc Matthews said: “Bill, I want you to take the pouch —it's a rather large pouch—over to Switzerland. And I can't tell you what's in it, but there are 15 or 20 bags.”

I was naturally suspicious but asked no questions only replying: “Yes, sir.”

So I took the train from Vichy to Lyon where you had to transfer to another one. Fortunately, there were porters to carry all this stuff to the second train where it filled my compartment. I was scared that something awful might happen, for the train passed through the German occupied zone. Regulations required that the window curtains be pulled down, lights turned off, and there I was in the compartment sitting on top of these bags for what seemed hours. Finally I raised a shade a little and seeing the lights of Switzerland thought, “ Thank God!” I delivered the bags to the Consulate in Geneva where

a regular courier would take them from there to Washington. But if the Germans had known, that train would have been stopped, and I would have disappeared. It was a scary thing.

Q: Oh! Well, you left there before our invasion of North Africa.

TRIMBLE: Yes.

Q: We ended the whole Vichy period for us because then the Germans came in and took over all of France.

TRIMBLE: After Pearl Harbor.

Q: When did you leave? Well, even with Pearl Harbor, they didn't come into Vichy. They didn't come into Vichy until we landed in November of 1942.

TRIMBLE: That's right. You're quite right. Doc Matthews had left then, and the Vichy staff had been cut even further down. My wife had been evacuated in June, 1940. All the wives had to leave for the United States. I hadn't seen my children in two years. I hadn't had any home leave for three or four. So I asked to have home leave, and it was approved by the Department. This, I think, was June 1941—maybe May or June, I don't remember which month.

As Doc Matthews' wife, who had joined him in Vichy, had to go back and see her children who were in school in this country, the Department said, “Both of you can go back together.” So we drove south—I spoke Spanish as well as French—in my car and got enough gasoline to get to the Spanish border and then on to Madrid, and finally to Lisbon where we both took the PanAm clipper back. So I got home.

Q: This is when?

TRIMBLE: June 1940.

Q: June '41?

TRIMBLE: '41, rather. I was appalled, really, having seen the poverty, lack of nourishment, shortages and rationing of almost everything in France, by the luxurious life in this country, how much waste there was. “They're wasting this and wasting that,” I thought. And the American people were not thinking that we might become involved in the war. “Everything is all right. We're out of it!” Isolation was still very strong, except at the presidential and higher levels. But it was strong. And I was quite disturbed. I couldn't understand how my friends, fellow citizens, fellow Americans couldn't appreciate what was happening, and it was quite frustrating. Some did, of course, but many didn't. Remember, it was just in 1940 that the draft bill was passed by only one vote in the House of Representatives. There was a very strong feeling, we must stay out.

Anyhow, I came here. I was given home leave, joined my family again. And then when Doc Matthews wanted me to come back again, I agreed to do so, but the Department said, “No, you've had enough of that separation, hardship in occupied areas and so on, and we're going to send you somewhere else. Since you speak Spanish, we're going to assign you to Lima.”

So I said, “All right.”

And then my orders were changed. A friend of mine called me from the Department. “Bill, get some huarches, meaning a transfer to Mexico.” So I was sent to Mexico City.

That was the time when President Avila Comacho and President Roosevelt had met on the Border.

Q: This is the President of Mexico.

TRIMBLE: Yes, Avila Comacho. This, I suppose must have been around May 1941. I don't remember the exact date they met. And the President of Mexico said, “Our economy is in

bad shape because you're concentrating on helping the Europeans with lend lease and that type of thing. So would you help us in getting raw materials, spare parts, chemicals, steel, etc.? Not oil, but other things they needed.

And President Roosevelt replied: “Yes, we'll certainly do what we can, if in turn you will sell us exclusively certain strategic minerals such as mercury which we need for”—remember we were neutral then and the President had to be very careful about it,— “which we need for our defense buildup.” And added: “We'll send somebody down there to help in getting what you need.”

I knew nothing about this type of thing, but I had an economic background.

Q: Well, we really didn't have much of an economic core of officers at that time, anyway.

TRIMBLE: No. No, we didn't have. We brought in people from the Department of Commerce in 1939 when they amalgamated the Foreign Service—the State Department Foreign Service of the United States and the Department of Commerce Foreign Service amalgamated. But we didn't have many. We had a very good man in charge of economic matters in the Department, Dr. Herbert Fels, who liked me so I was chosen for the assignment and went through a crash course in Washington on what we called export licenses and certificates of necessity.

I got down to Mexico. I think that was in July 1941 with my family. The Ambassador there was Josephus Daniels.

Q: Oh, yes. Famous name going way back to Veracruz.

TRIMBLE: Veracruz incident.

Q: Yes. And that was Wilson's Secretary of the Navy.

TRIMBLE: Yes. And he didn't want to increase the size of his staff, so I couldn't move into the Embassy and had an office downtown. He didn't like to have a lot of new faces. He was—

Q: Let me stop right here.

[End Tape 1, Side 2. Begin Tape 2, Side 1]

Q: You were saying about Josephus Daniels and how he didn't want to have you as part of the Embassy.

TRIMBLE: No, he did not. He had a small staff, and he didn't want to increase it at all. But you had to at that time. All embassies in Latin America were increased because of the war period. However, he didn't want to change. He didn't, as I have said, want to see new faces. Also, he was sensitive because of the Veracruz incident, that was when we sent in the Marines. And he had been Secretary of Navy.

Q: We're talking about 1915, I guess.

TRIMBLE: '15, yes, I think it was. We sent Marines into Veracruz after Pancho Villa's guerrillas had raided New Mexico. And then there had been, just a year or so before, the nationalization of the oil companies.

Q: The Cardenas period, wasn't it?

TRIMBLE: Cardenas.

Q: Cardenas, yes.

TRIMBLE: Standard Oil, British Petroleum, Royal Dutch Shell, and one or two other companies, all nationalized and combined into what was called PEMEX, which is the national company. And it was done without any compensation. There had been a year

before a long debate in the Mexican Congress on this issue, and speeches about—”Down with the Gringos!,” “Get the foreign oil companies out” and clapping. As Mr. Daniels didn't understand Spanish he also clapped. [Laughter] Anyhow, he was a very nice man but not suited for the job at all.

Then I think this was probably in July or August 1941, a congressional group of four or five congressmen came to Latin America to see what was happening down there and as they were flying from one country to another, had their mail sent to the Embassy in Mexico City which was the last stop. However, it could not be found due to the Ambassador's insistence on keeping the staff small, and they went back furious. So on returning to Washington they told President Roosevelt, “You'll have to get rid of this man. He won't let the Embassy increase in size. There's so many more duties and responsibilities they have now with the war in Europe and so on.” Well, Mr. Daniels every year would go back home to Atlanta and see his family. Each time he'd call on the President, and say, “You know, Mr. President, I'm getting older and older, and I think I should resign.”

And the President, who always called him “Chief” because he had been his Assistant Secretary of Navy, would reply, “Oh no, Chief, we need you down there, Chief!”

But when Mr. Daniels did so again following the mail incident he answered,”Well, if you feel that way, Chief!” [Laughter] It's a true story. So George Messersmith replaced him as Ambassador and an excellent choice for the job.

My office was moved to the Embassy building when we entered the war, Pearl Harbor was in December, 1941, and since my responsibilities now included the preparation of a series of basic reports on Mexico's import needs, was given a couple of assistants. Less than a year later I was transferred to the Department as Assistant Chief of the Division of Hemispheric Export Requirements, and when it was abolished in 1943 due to jurisdictional overlapping with the Board of Economic Warfare, was assigned to the Division for European Affairs where I dealt with Scandinavia and —

Q: During this period you were in Northern European affairs. I have from 1943 to 1946. One of the key figures in our foreign affairs establishment in that time was the head of European Affairs, James C. Dunn. From your point of view, how did he operate, and what were his major interests?

TRIMBLE: Jimmy Dunn had been a long time—he was a great prot#g# of Mr. Hull, and the chief of protocol at one time. An able man, very able. He was interested in Europe, primarily in Western Europe—that is, France and England, not so much in Spain, Italy or other countries. And he had under him able chiefs for each area: Northern European Affairs, Western European Affairs, British and Canadian Affairs and especially East European Affairs. He was outstanding, and it was a very good office or bureau or whatever you want to call it. So I worked on Scandinavian matters.

Q: Well, of course, for most of that period of time Norway and Denmark were occupied. How did we feel toward Sweden? Because I have talked to others who were saying, you know, that the Swedes bet on Germany, and Germany lost. It was a bit difficult for them to make the adjustment.

TRIMBLE: By this time, Germany had not lost. Actually, the Russians were losing. The Danes had a free-Danish movement headed by Henrik Kauffmann who was the Minister of Denmark in Washington, and we had taken over the Danish ships in this country and used them for ourselves. The Norwegians had a very good man—I forgot his name now. The Swedes, as always, were neutral. They had kept out of all European wars since the time of Napoleon because “We're so smart.” Well, it wasn't because they were so smart, for they were providing minerals, high-grade steel, and iron ore, to the German war effort. Hitler said, “Why should we invade when we're getting everything we want from Sweden?” If the Swedes were truly neutral why did they permit two German divisions to cross Sweden into Finland to fight against the Russians? Their neutrality was elastic, in other words, depending on which way the wind was blowing.

Q: Were we trying to put any pressure on them?

TRIMBLE: Oh, we did.

Q: And that was your bailiwick, wasn't it?

TRIMBLE: That was one of my bailiwicks.

Q: What were we trying to do, and how effective was it?

TRIMBLE: We wanted them to stop sending ball bearings and steel, particularly ball bearings, SKF ball bearings—

Q: SKF is the—

TRIMBLE: Yes. To the German war effort. And then when we wanted them to release the American pilots who had flown over Germany and force-landed in Sweden. The Swedes—I like the Swedes, but I've never had a high regard, for them—said, “All right, we'll do this, but as we're neutral, we'll also release all the German pilots who have landed in Sweden as well as the Americans.” Well, of course, there were no German pilots in Sweden or only a few.

Q: Yes. And those that did just could probably take a train and get out.

TRIMBLE: Yes. There were several hundred Americans, actually.

Q: How did we get them out?

TRIMBLE: We flew them out to England in transport planes.

Q: Had to be at night and, I mean, it was—

TRIMBLE: Yes. They flew them out in Air Force planes, the British, too. But, anyhow, the Swedes played a neutral game that swung from one side to the other depending on which was doing better. But to claim we stayed out because we're so smart was actually because the Germans didn't want to invade.

Q: What was our attitude towards Finland? Because we've had a high regard for Finland, particularly because they had resisted the Russians and they're the only country to pay off the World War II war debt.

TRIMBLE: Oh, I know that.

Q: I mean, I'm sure you heard that a hundred times, and yet they were actively fighting the Soviets who were our allies.

TRIMBLE: No, that was done before we got in it.

Q: Yes. But—

TRIMBLE: The first winter war.

Q: But when you got there, we must have had somewhat of an ambivalent attitude towards them.

TRIMBLE: No, that was later. Well, you see, the first winter war started in 1940, and their Marshal Mannerheim, beat the Russians. Then the Russians came back again and this time defeated the Finns. We helped the Finns as much as we could, not military but food and things like that, because we had a great respect for the Finns. And we also received some very good reports from, our Legation in Helsinki, one by Rob McClintock, I particularly remember.

We helped the Finns, but after we were in the war and allied with Russia couldn't do much, nor could we do anything for Estonia, for that matter, or Latvia or Lithuania.

Q: So on these we didn't really try to do anything one way or another?

TRIMBLE: We couldn't, really.

Q: We couldn't. I mean, it was a very difficult—

TRIMBLE: We couldn't have gotten there. Sweden was neutral. Sweden liked the Finns very much, but they let the German troops through.

Q: Were you there at the end of the war dealing with this?

TRIMBLE: No. Let's see, yes. Yes, I was there at the end of the war in Washington, yes.

Q: Well, what was our attitude at the end of the war? Just sort of relations are going to be all the same or—

TRIMBLE: With Russia?

Q: Well, I'm talking about your area.

TRIMBLE: Yes. We had close ties with the Norwegians, particularly, and the Danes, fair with the Swedes and had with the Finns, too, good relations. With the Swedes it was a proper relationship, I'll say that. And always in that period there was suspicion in the State Department of the Russians, very strong, very strong feeling. We didn't trust the Russians.

Q: This was at the time we were watching—

TRIMBLE: At that time, yes.

Q: But within the European bureau there was no feeling that somehow because of this great victory that the Soviet tiger was going to change—leopard or whatever it is that has spots, anyway.

TRIMBLE: The leopard has changing spots.

Q: Yes. You didn't think this was going to—

TRIMBLE: No. No, no. Mr. Davies has written this “wonderful book” about the Soviet Union and what fine people—no, we knew.

Q: And were there talks between the officers there, “We've got a problem at the end of the war?”

TRIMBLE: Oh, yes. I know that. Yes. For example, one thing that happened when I was in Northern European Affairs, after Mr. Hull died and was replaced by Mr. Stettinius, a nice fellow but not particularly well equipped for the job. And so he instituted a system there that every three months, I think, each country desk officer or whatever you want to call it, would write a brief paper on our relations with this country during the last three. Now to do so, the desk officer would coordinate information received from the economic section and other sections, the finance section, political, military and so forth. The paper would have to be very short because Stettinius didn't have time to read a lot of things.

So in coordinating the ones for the Scandinavian countries, it seemed to me that some of the data coming from what was called the Research and Analysis Section of the State Department were rather slanted. The Research and Analysis Section had been taken over from the OSS, Office of Strategic Services, which had brought in anybody who was anti-German—to be anti-German was the main qualification. And I found some of the contributions I was getting from a man in Analysis and Research Section in the State

Department were very slanted, Soviet slanted, playing down certain things that I knew were true, such as the occupation of Bornholm.

Q: Bornholm being the island.

TRIMBLE: The Danish island which the Russians occupied after the fighting was over. I'm not a Russian expert, so I went to one of my friends in the Office of East European Affairs named Elbridge Durbrow who said: “This looks very much like commie line, but I'll have Chip Bohlen look at it, too.” Chip was the head of that Office. He said, “It certainly is!”

So an investigation was made, and that caused a little trouble, because the man who had written the piece had been a young racial minority student in Denmark before the war and with very little money. At that time, the Russians used to recruit a number of these poor, idealistic foreign students, there, and he was probably one of them. And so you couldn't say that. You couldn't bring that part of it out. You could prove the material was pro-Russian, but you couldn't say it was because of his ideological views. It was pretty sticky business. But we got him out. He was the first commie gotten out of the State Department, because there were some, yes, but not nearly so many you know as McCarthy would claim.

Q: Yes. Well, no, this is the thing that, you know, in some of these interviews you talk about with McCarthy, I mean, he went greatly against both the problems with the homosexual element and with the communists. But yet these were not completely out of whole cloth.

TRIMBLE: No.

Q: There were problems.

TRIMBLE: Oh, there were some. But he exaggerated them a great deal.

Q: And used them for his own purpose.

TRIMBLE: Yes. As a matter of fact, I've—talking about the homosexual encountered thing—had only one in my life in the Foreign Service, a non-career vice consul, who sort of made approaches to me. I said I was a boxing champion at Princeton which was untrue, and if any son of a bitch touched me, I'd knock his head off! [Laughter] About the only one I've ever seen. But I'm sure there were others.

Q: Yes. But the feel was that we were permeated, and that wasn't—

TRIMBLE: Oh, no, no.

Q: Well, you left Northern European Affairs, but you then moved to—

TRIMBLE: Iceland.

Q: Iceland, which makes some sense, which is sort of unusual.

TRIMBLE: I had been dealing with Iceland, too, among other—

Q: What was the situation? You went there in 1947, and you were there in '48.

TRIMBLE: Well, actually, I first went to the National War College. It was the first class of the National War College. I think ten of us or twelve of us were from the State Department, the rest from the Army, Navy and Air Force, and it was an excellent experience. Excellent! George Kennan was Deputy for International Affairs and General Gruenther, the Deputy Commandant, was outstanding.

Q: Really, probably the great intellectual of the military.

TRIMBLE: Yes. And, unfortunately, because there had been no recruitment in the Foreign Service during the war years, such a shortage of officers and so many new posts opening

up that they took all but one of us out—I think the course started in August 1946—in December when the first semester was over, and assigned us in the field. Jack Cabot went to Shanghai, others to various posts and me to Iceland. So I only had half the academic year there, which was, fortunately, the first semester which dealt mostly with political and economic affairs, as the second was military, which wasn't particularly my field.

So I went to Iceland as Charg#, and apparently the Department liked my work sufficiently to let me remain as Charg# for over a year, rather than send in a new minister.

Q: Well, what was the situation? We must have been withdrawing our—we had a naval base and we had Meeks Field there and all.

TRIMBLE: We had signed an agreement with Iceland in 1946, early in '46, that we would withdraw our military forces on such and such a date. They were largely Air Force, and at Meeks Field. It was a landing field with planes going from Canada to there to refuel and then over to England. And so, let's see, the Russians were very much interested in Iceland because of strategic position, as we were, of course, in the North Atlantic.So I was sent there to try to prevent the Russians from getting a foothold, which we'll discuss a little bit, and also to see that American troops were moved out on time, which was a difficult matter.

Q: Why was that difficult?

TRIMBLE: As the deadline came closer and closer, a military ship vessel, a military transport with troops and officers from Germany was meant to pick them up. It was very rough weather in March or February of 1947. So the officers and brass on board, the generals, got terribly seasick, and they told the captain that he could not stop in Iceland. He had been ordered to embark the troops there. But, no, the brass said, “No, don't stop.” So I had to arrange an airlift, a couple of PBYs to take this group over to—

Q: PBYs being the seaplane.

TRIMBLE: Flying boat, that type of thing. And flew them over to Greenland. But we met the deadline.

Q: Well, the Icelanders always have been unhappy with too many foreigners on their soil.TRIMBLE: Oh, yes.

Q: And so, I suppose, the fact that we really were living up to this agreement in getting out must have helped your position.

TRIMBLE: It did and helped me a lot, and there was very fine Minister of Foreign Affairs, Bjarni Bennediktsen. He died some years ago. Excellent man. Very pro-American. He got them into NATO; it was largely due to him. And also their Ambassador in Washington, Thor Thors, was very good, and I worked very closely with him. Also they had a shortage of oil and needed oil for their fishing fleet, very much. They depended on fishing. And I was able to arrange for a special tanker to come over there and bring it to them, and they appreciated that.

Q: Well, you say your job was to keep the Russians out. Now, how does an American charg# to a legation keep Russians out?

TRIMBLE: Because I found out who the Russian agents were, and I could pass the information to the Foreign Minister. He was anti-Soviet, too, very much so, as most of the government were, most, not all of them. There was a strong Communist Party. And the Russians would have wanted but didn't actually have the economic means or resources to take over the country or try to take over the country. Rather what they were doing was spying on what we were doing.

Q: But your main occupation then was to keep Iceland from getting isolated and become a —

TRIMBLE: Yes, neutral like Sweden.

Q: Or being an easy target.

TRIMBLE: Yes, exactly.

Q: Was this difficult dealing with Washington? Because Iceland is sort of off there.

TRIMBLE: No.

Q: It wasn't?

TRIMBLE: No. Because Washington realized the importance, strategic importance of Iceland. That's why they got Iceland into NATO.

Q: Yes. Because, I guess, it also it was the first country we had sent troops to before we even got into World War II. So we knew its importance.

TRIMBLE: Oh, yes. We had, as I said, when we got the troops out, we wanted continued use of an air field there which is called Keflav#k now for transatlantic planes. They had to refuel somewhere. They couldn't go across on a flight direct to Europe as they can now. And so we worked out an agreement that the American Airlines would have a subsidiary called American Overseas Airlines to take charge of operating the field from the military when the Air Force was withdrawn. Unfortunately, many of the group the AOA sent over came from the scum of New York and were awful drunks.

Q: The AOA is?

TRIMBLE: American Overseas Airlines. And some were also homosexuals, all types. It was pretty bad, really. So we had to clean that mess up. Somebody in their organization had picked up these people in New York. So we finally got that group out and got in some Scandinavian Americans from Minnesota, and they were good. But that was one of

the problems I had. And the then head of the so-called “air department” of the Icelandic government was a commie. That didn't help.

Q: You know, sometimes there are communist parties and communist parties, and they change over the years. But in the post world war years, these communists were closely allied to the Soviets?

TRIMBLE: Oh, yes.

Q: And they were moving to Soviet orders?

TRIMBLE: Oh, yes, very much so. There's no question about that. You remember, the COMINTERN had been very important, if you know what the COMINTERN was.

Q: Yes.

TRIMBLE: Yes, they were very strong. Anyhow, I liked the Icelanders, and I think they liked me. They're different people, very stubborn, very nationalistic, but honest and sincere and able people—I'm very fond of Icelanders—and very well educated. Even though they're insulated in their outlook in certain respects, very well-educated people.

So I stayed there until the Department finally decided that they would send a Minister. That was 1948. And I remained with him a couple of weeks to break him in on the situation, and then went home on leave, after which I was transferred to London.

Q: What were you doing in London? I have you there from '48 to 1951.

TRIMBLE: Yes, I was and doing various jobs, two in particular ones. One was working on German matters, reporting on the British, their views on Germany at that time, keeping in touch with our High Commission, working on various agreements as the International Authority for the Ruhr and the Occupation Statute for Germany. And, let's see, we helped

with food for the Germans and liaison with the military in Germany and particularly Bob Murphy, at that time Political Advisor to General Clay, who was then head—

Q: The High Commissioner in Germany.

TRIMBLE: And on German matters also in London with the British and French, for they and the Americans were working together. The Russians wouldn't work with us. That was one job I had and continued to have. And my other was reporting on British domestic politics—the Labor Party, the Liberal Party and the Conservative Party—with my two excellent assistants, as well as Sam Burger.

Q: He was my boss when I was in Vietnam.

TRIMBLE: Really?

Q: He was assistant—yes, I have a high regard for him. In fact, it's I feel one of the great tragedies of this oral history program that we didn't get Sam Burger.

TRIMBLE: Sam was a brilliant officer, and he worked on the Labor Party aspect, because you couldn't work on both Conservatives and Labor, and he had many contacts—he had been labor attach#—and he was very good.

Q: I was told he was really our opening in the Embassy, that the Embassy had naturally gravitated towards the conservative side just because these were where the contacts had been and traditionally had been.

TRIMBLE: Yes, that was true under Lew Douglas, whose picture is up there. [Tape Recorder Turned Off]

Q: Okay. We were talking about our contacts with the—

TRIMBLE: With various parties, political parties. Lew Douglas was a very fine chief, a very good ambassador. But his contacts were with the Conservative Party and what remained of the Liberal Party, which was disappearing rapidly. So I had two assistants, one a very good girl, Tibbetts, as well as Sam Berger before he left.

Q: Margaret Tibbetts?

TRIMBLE: Yes.

Q: Both of them later became ambassadors.

TRIMBLE: Yes. She worked with me on a report on the British attitude towards the United States. This was roughly the time of the Korean War. There was a great deal of criticism about it there, and we drafted what was thought to be an excellent paper on the subject. I don't know whatever happened to it. It's probably in the files somewhere.

Sam was transferred, as I recall, shortly after the British elections of 1950. The outcome of that in 1951 we predicted right on the nose how it was going to come out. That's when the Labor Party finally went out. I found that work very, very interesting.

Q: Can I go back to a couple of points here?

TRIMBLE: Yes.

Q: One, you say you dealt with matters dealing with Germany, with the British. Now, am I right in thinking that the British, for very obvious reasons, took a much harder line on the Germans than the Americans did? We have a tendency to say, "Well, let bygones be bygones, and let's get on with it," particularly with the Korean War coming up, but also not just the Korean War, but you arrived just about the time Czechoslovakia went under. Whereas, the British have long, deep and justifiable concerns about Germany, and they

weren't as magnanimous as the Americans with the Atlantic between them. I mean, did you have to deal with this problem? And how did you deal with it?

TRIMBLE: Yes. Although the agreements worked out—the occupation statute, etc.—were a tripartite thing: the French, British and ourselves, we had, because we were supplying most of the aid, food and so forth to Germany, was called a weighted vote. An American vote meant more than the British vote or the French vote.

Q: Wherever you sat, you were at the head of the table.

TRIMBLE: In a sense. But you had to be very careful about using it. We did have the weighted vote, because England couldn't help. Their economy was such they could not. Neither could France. And we did, and we had different ideas what future Germany should be than the British did. As Douglas' deputies—he was too busy with other matters—Julius Holmes, the Minister of the Embassy and I did the negotiations, and it was a little difficult.

By and large, I found the British people in the Foreign Office I worked with as opposed to the British Treasury—Stafford Cripps is another matter—were very broad-minded and very able. The Under Secretary for German Affairs (Yvon Kirkpatrick) had served as Embassy Counselor in Germany before the war. He knew Germans. He knew greatly about them and felt that Germany would become a democracy again. And, by and large, the Foreign Office people were very cooperative.

Q: In other words, with the Foreign Office you were dealing with professionals who were looking at this as a practical measure. But you mentioned the Treasury and Stafford Cripps. What was the problem there?

TRIMBLE: He didn't like the Germans. That's all. He didn't want any financial help to them and tried to—Treasury was pretty nasty. But I will say that Bevin, Secretary of State was excellent.

Q: Was this Ernest Bevin?

TRIMBLE: Ernest Bevin. Ernie. He was outstanding.

Q: He was probably the premier foreign minister that Britain has had.

TRIMBLE: Oh, there's no question about it. I'll tell you one story. He was a very good friend of Dean Acheson. I remember Mr. Bevin had to go to the hospital for an unnamed operation. We reported it to Washington and Mr. Acheson sent a message, for the Embassy to deliver—"Best wishes" and so forth. It was just after the operation. So I delivered it to Mr. Bevin's personal private secretary who said, "You know, Bill, Ernie told me he thought he would hear from his friend Dean, and told me to tell him 'It's not me 'ead but me latter end.'" [Laughter]

Q: Oh, wonderful!

TRIMBLE: Hemorrhoids.

Q: Yes.

TRIMBLE: He was excellent.

Q: Looking at this, I've never really understood why was it that Britain seemed to move so poorly out of the post-war period. I mean, they had rationing for something like seven years later. When I was in Germany close to that period, you know, things were really ticking.

TRIMBLE: And they were in Belgium, and they were in Holland, too.

Q: What was the problem?

TRIMBLE: Well, their industry had been pretty badly hurt during the war, very badly hurt. There was social unrest, not really major strikes, but labor unions were pretty difficult. There was a class feeling between the Tories and the Labor Party, and they wouldn't really work together. They had had to during the war, but now one Party was in power, and social differences were found in schools and almost every part of life. And they were groping.

They lost their position as a great world power, and they resented that, and they resented us for possessing it—many people still do for taking over their role. And their economy was in pretty bad shape. They were depending entirely upon oil from abroad. They hadn't developed the North Sea oil fields yet. And we came with the Marshall Plan. They appreciated it but resented the fact that they had to take aid from us.

They didn't really start recovering until about four or five years later. And they had loss of life, of course, and the destruction was very great in the cities. And there was that insular feeling of the British, and then there's also jealousy of us, which is understandable. I can understand it.

Q: But at your level, you were able, not with the Treasury, but with the foreign office, you—

TRIMBLE: Yes, they were broader-minded people, and most of the people were. I had friends in Parliament and so forth, both parties and very good people. But there was a certain resistance to us but understandable. It's a proud country and having been at the top they would get irritated with us. I can see their point of view. But by and large, the relationship was good, particularly with Ernie Bevin because he was very able. And Mr. Attlee was pretty good, too.

Q: Well, then you moved. You went as minister of—

TRIMBLE: Since I had dealt with German matters in London from 1948 to '51, and the time of an assignment is generally three years, the Department wanted to send me as political

counselor in Germany. That was at the time of McCarthy and the original selection, I've forgotten his name, had been an old China hand so was in McCarthy's black book.

Q: John Stewart Service or one of those?

TRIMBLE: No.

Q: John Patton Davis?

TRIMBLE: One of them. I can't remember.

Q: I mean, there were a number of them.

TRIMBLE: Anyhow, he was meant to go as political counselor—this is still in the period of military government, High Commission, rather. Jack McCloy—I think it was Jack, said, “I'm not going to take anybody else. I'm irritated with this McCarthy thing, and until this man is vindicated, I'll leave his position open.” But McCarthy was finally able to get the man out, and I was sent there as Minister of the Embassy.

Q: To?

TRIMBLE: To Bonn.

Q: To Bonn.

TRIMBLE: No, wait a minute. I'm jumping ahead.

Q: I'm looking at The Hague.

TRIMBLE: Oh, no. The Hague. That's right. Let's see, yes, that was it. They wanted to send me as political counselor in Germany, and Mr. McCloy said, “No. Because as long as this other man is—I'm going to back him up as long as I can.” The post at The Hague was open. So they moved me to The Hague instead. That was it.

Q: You served there from '51 to '54. You were quite fortunate to have two career ambassadors who knew their way around.

TRIMBLE: Selden Chapin and Doc Matthews.

Q: Yes. So that must have been a real good—

TRIMBLE: Yes, and I had some very good friends. I was Charg# quite often there. And we enjoyed The Hague. It was so different. There was hardship in London. It really was a hardship post then.

Q: That's what I was going to say. Really, it was a very difficult—

TRIMBLE: Oh, it was hard.

Q: It lasted for so long compared to other places, which seems to be there were internal reasons for it.

TRIMBLE: Their economy was in bad shape, really. And Holland had suffered, yes, but nothing like it. And they had a more liberal trade policy than the English. So living conditions were much better.

Q: What were the main issues you had to deal with in Holland in this '51 to '54?

TRIMBLE: The EDF, European Defense Force. And we got the Dutch to go along with us. It was hard work.

Q: Could you explain for the record what that was?

TRIMBLE: It was a plan for a European army composed of troops of all the western nations—it would be a European army rather than a French army or British army or—the Germans were not in it—or a Belgium army or Dutch army, but one unified command

and officers interchangeable and soldiers interchangeable. It was a very good project. The French didn't like it, and it fell through. But the Dutch agreed. Doug MacArthur was working on the Paris end, and I on the Dutch. We got them to go along and then the French torpedoed the proposal.

Q: Actually, the French had initially proposed it.

TRIMBLE: Yes, I know they did.

Q: As more a ploy and we picked it up.

TRIMBLE: I worked on that. Then there was, of course, work on the successor to the Marshall Plan- -now called AID but I don't remember what it was called in those days as it's name was changed so often—which helped their economy. And the Dutch were—I like the Dutch. They're stubborn.

Q: Decolonization must have—I mean, this is a very difficult matter for the Dutch to deal with. And, of course, we weren't, in their eyes, playing a very helpful role. This must have occupied a lot of your time, didn't it?

TRIMBLE: It did. They resented the fact that we—President Roosevelt, felt very much against colonialism, British, French colonies, etc. The British were giving up their's. For reasons of their own, they had to, India, particularly India and Pakistan. But the French wanted to hold on. That's when they had the North African affair.

And the Dutch were weak. They couldn't hold Indonesia. After all, it had been taken over by the Japanese. But they wanted it back, so did many of the—I forgot the name of the group in Indonesia who had fought for the Dutch and were very pro-Dutch, and were Christians, as I recall, rather than Moslems. Many of them had fled to Holland, where they were living in pretty bad conditions in Rotterdam and Amsterdam. The Dutch had the feeling of nationalism, “This is ours!” So that was difficult.

But they didn't resent us as much because actually Indonesia had gotten its independence before I got there. Still many Dutch felt that we should have helped them more. But that wasn't much of a problem. I liked the Dutch. And we tried to get them to take more and more part in NATO.

Q: They have always been really rather begrudging, haven't they? On NATO they have not been wholeheartedly into it often for their own internal politics, have they?

TRIMBLE: That happened afterwards. But when I was there, no, because they still remembered the German occupation, which was pretty hard on them.

Q: Well, now, this is the period when we're getting the Germans cranked up, back in, trying to integrate Western Germany into the Atlantic Alliance. Was this a problem for you dealing with the Dutch? Because the Dutch and the Germans have not been the best of neighbors, let's say.

TRIMBLE: That's true. But when I was there, they did establish with Western Germany, whatever you want to call it, West Germany, diplomatic relations, and there was a German ambassador. There was a very strong feeling against the Germans, but they realized that with safeguards, always safeguards—

Q: We're talking now in 1990 when the problem is still with us. Because West and East Germany appear to be coming together, and everybody is looking for safeguards.

TRIMBLE: They were after safeguards. West Germany in coming into NATO and so forth. But they finally were realistic enough. I think leaders were, especially the Prime Minister (Dr. Drees) who was a Labor Party man, and the Foreign Minister, Stikker, was also. There were pretty good people, able people, in the government. We did have some difficulties, but not many. There was a feeling, again, that we were taking over their cultural heritage, and we were nearly not as cultured as themselves, and that we were trying to do

so through our aid program, take over their educational system. We weren't. But there was always that type of thing.

Q: You went to sort of a real change of scene, back to the Western Hemisphere. You went to Rio de Janeiro. In those days, of course, our Embassy was in Rio. And you were there from '54 to '56. How did that assignment come about?

TRIMBLE: This is a little tricky. A Foreign Service friend of mine who was older than I, had gone to the same school—I didn't know him at school—was the child of American parents living in Brazil and spoke perfect Brazilian. He had been sent to Brazil as Minister-Counselor having served there before. He had a Spanish wife. And he got along extremely well with the Brazilians because he had this background, really. Then President Eisenhower sent down as ambassador a man named Mr. Kemper.

Q: James S. Kemper.

TRIMBLE: James S. Kemper.

Q: What was his background?

TRIMBLE: Mr. Kemper was a big insurance executive, Kemper Insurance of Chicago, a little man, very pompous, very domineering. He had been Treasurer of the Republican National Committee, so they sent him down to Brazil as ambassador. He resented the fact that his Minister-Counselor knew the Brazilians! He didn't have any foreign language, and he didn't get along himself with them because he was tough, rude and arrogant. So at a staff meeting he said to the Minister-Counselor: “You're fired!”, and relieved him of all duties. And then the Department took months to transfer the DCM.

I was then in Holland and Doc Matthews had just arrived as ambassador on Christmas Day—

Q: This would be?

TRIMBLE: '54. Christmas Day afternoon. We were having drinks together and he said, “I just got a message from the Department saying they want to transfer you to Rio, but I need you here so I've drafted a reply that you don't want to go.”

I said, “No, you can't say that. I will go anywhere they want me to go.” Which we have to do in the Foreign Service.

So he changed it. I can see his point of view. I knew the Dutch, and he didn't. So, anyhow, he insisted that I remain for a couple of months, which I did. Then I had home leave which I hadn't had for three or four years. Mr. Kemper was angry that I hadn't arrived sooner. I finally got there just around early July of 1954.

Q: '55?

TRIMBLE: '54. We went by boat. You couldn't fly, really, then. You could but it was pretty difficult so we came by boat. And I studied phonetic Brazilian, which didn't help much, at the Foreign Service Language Institute. My wife and I had to go every day. We used part of the home leave to study in Washington.

Anyhow, the Ambassador arranged that when the boat pulled in—I was coming as Minister-Counselor and the Embassy's number two—no one would meet me except the assistant administrative officer. The assistant naval attach# hadn't gotten the instructions, so he was there, too—or Army attach#—and a few other people met us. I was taken to—they had reserved hotel rooms at a Copacaba#a for my children and wife and myself, and told I was to attend a staff meeting at 2:30 that afternoon. A car would be sent to take me down to the Embassy—a great, big building, beautiful building, lots of staff offices and a meeting room with a long, long table.

I sat at the Ambassador's right. “All sit down! Trimble is coming here as DCM.” Then—

Q: He held out a—

TRIMBLE: after taking off his wristwatch said:—

Q: He had his wristwatch.

TRIMBLE: “You've got five minutes. Anything to say?” It was really pretty humiliating. He didn't introduce me to any Brazilians at all. And my office was wired for sound.

Q: You mean tapped?

TRIMBLE: Tapped. He had brought two secretaries from his office down with him, who were very nice girls. One was my secretary, and one was his. My secretary told me about it. Also, I'd have to knock—adjoining rooms, his off of mine—knock on the door to get in, or I'd have to go through his secretary to get into see him.

And then he used to have an apartment—it was a big office and he had a special apartment upstairs in addition to a big residence—and he'd go up there and get drunk—not really drunk. He couldn't drink much, and smoke these beautiful Havana cigars which cost—he used to tell us $1.25 a piece. A most disagreeable person.

The Brazilians didn't like him. He didn't want me to do anything and the office was pretty much in shambles. Some of the staff were good, but he dominated everyone. And he'd take his Air Force plane with friends of his, a girlfriend and others, fly them around the country.

Then he made an unfortunate mistake. Coffee was the big crop of Brazil and on a trip to New York he said in a speech: “The prices are coming down, hold off. Don't buy any coffee now.” [Laughter] From then on the Brazilians despised him.

That was around nine months after my arrival, and by then I'd lost 15 pounds, which I couldn't afford to do. It was just a pretty difficult situation, very nasty man—at least I

thought so, and some of the staff did, too. He wouldn't introduce me to anybody. You are generally taken to the Foreign Office and meet people there, but I had to do it myself. He never had us to a meal and only once to a reception.

Finally when Herbert Hoover, Jr., the Under Secretary of State, came down on a trip I pulled him aside—Mr. Kemper was then on leave in the United States—and said, “Mr. Secretary, the Ambassador is hurting our relations with Brazil so badly that he should be replaced.”

I remember once when the Papal Nuncio was leaving, the Ambassador told the Finnish Minister: “Hey, I'm too busy to see him off. You go down to the boat and represent me, would ya?” It was just awful. So Mr. Hoover got rid of him.

Q: Well, this, of course, is a very serious problem. Because sometimes these appointments are made for political purposes, and often the people are sort of taking over, and they have their strengths, and they have their staff, and they all work together, and it works out. But when you get somebody who is really harming your interests, then what do you do?

TRIMBLE: I had to. That's all I could do.

Q: Well, what happened with this Kemper? You had told Herbert Hoover, Jr. that he was harming our interests which—

TRIMBLE: Is against the national interest. And he reported back, and they brought Kemper back to Washington. They gave him an assignment as advisor to the State Department for several months. Then he was out. He really was dangerous. Jimmy Dunn replaced him as Ambassador.

We used to have a political appointee ambassador in Chile whose wife was Chilean and who spoke Spanish well, but as someone said, was a bull in a china shop, who always brought his china shop along with him. [Laughter]

And he was, I would say, the same type of person. They were hurting us much. Brazil had been our oldest ally and friend, because they were Portuguese and the other countries Spanish, they felt nearer to us. We had very close relations with Brazil.

Q: Well, we had them even during the wars of independence.

TRIMBLE: Yes.

Q: I mean, it was one of the few places where we've never had any great difficulties.

TRIMBLE: Yes. Dom Pedro Primeiro was our friend, and Dom Pedro Segundo came up here for the exhibition of 1876.

Q: 1876. The Centennial Exhibition in Philadelphia, 1876.

TRIMBLE: And this is not part of the thing, but I had a great-great-grandfather, who was Scottish, born in Gibraltar. I think he got in some trouble in Gibraltar. I never knew what. But he went to Brazil, and into the coffee business. His name was Maxwell, and that's Maxwell House Coffee today. Of course, it was sold many years later. And he married a Brazilian girl, at the time of Dom Pedro Primeiro, who was the first emperor, not the second. And was a friend of his and then of Dom Pedro Segundo. So, when I went to Brazil, it was just after Vargas' suicide, I could say I too have Brazilian blood and ties going back to the period of Dom Pedro Primeiro, not just Segundo. And it helped me a great deal.

Q: Oh, I'm sure it did. How long did you stay?

TRIMBLE: I stayed in Brazil from July '54 until August '56. And then I received a letter from a friend in the Department saying: “As you know we want to send you to a very important post in Europe.” But I didn't know. Then I received orders as Minister of the Embassy in Bonn.

Q: Well, now, before we go to that, we were mentioning at lunch—you mentioned there was an episode going way back about Eleanor Roosevelt.

TRIMBLE: Oh, yes.

Q: I wonder if we can put that in now?

TRIMBLE: Yes. In 1940, the Spanish Civil War was just over. A number of Spanish refugees who had fled to France were put in camps, internment camps, in Southern France—Gurs, Septfonds, Argeles and one or two others. At this time, as you recall, the Ribbentrop-Molotov Agreement had been signed.

Q: This was about August of '39.

TRIMBLE: No, this was around March—well, they signed in August, 1939. This was January or February of 1940, before the French pulled out and France fell. The Russians were backing the Germans, and the Communist Party was very strong in Paris, still strong in France then, although the Russian influence was weakening. And they put out rumors about harsh treatment the French were giving to the Spanish refugees in these camps. Now, Mrs. Roosevelt had a very big, great heart, and thought about the refugees and so forth, was quite upset about it.

So she had the State Department instruct Mr. Bullitt that he send out somebody to inspect the camps to see whether the allegation was true or not. Since I spoke both Spanish and French, I was assigned to make this trip. And Nancy and I—our children were not here, still hadn't joined us and actually never did—went down and saw each of the camps. And

I could talk freely to the refugees. Only in one camp did the French have people watching me, listening to me. I found that they were, by and large, well treated depending on the commandant, some were very good. The food was just as good as the French had at that time. I saw the meals, saw what they had. And at one camp I remember seeing the French soldiers, guards, and the Spanish having a snowball fight together, laughing and playing together.I wrote back and reported on each camp. I said one camp was bad. And that's where the military guards were Senegalese.

Q: These were French colonial troops in Senegal.

TRIMBLE: Yes. They were pretty nasty. And the commandant wasn't much good. But in the rest of them, the French were doing a very good job and this when there was war. They were helping these people. They really were doing the best they could. And so I wrote the report, and it went back to Mrs. Roosevelt, because she was worried about the propaganda against the French as affecting our policy towards the Allies.

Q: Well, this, of course, was coming particularly from the left wing.

TRIMBLE: Oh, yes, very much.

Q: You were going to Bonn as deputy chief of mission.

TRIMBLE: Yes.

Q: Could you explain what was the situation at the time? Germany had gone through several stages. What were you doing there?

TRIMBLE: I was assigned there. The Ambassador at that time was Dr. Conant, former President of Harvard. Outstanding person. Many years before he had studied at a German university. He spoke fluent German with a very strong New England accent, since he was from New England. He was excellent for the job because he was a Herr Doktor Professor,

and Germans like that, you see. And he also was very sympathetic as Ambassador there. I worked with him, and I liked him very, very much.

It was a tremendous Embassy, carrying over from the High Commission days, and too many people. One of my jobs was to cut down the size of the staff, including, I might say, the CIA, and bring it down to what an embassy should be. And he backed me up 100%.

At that time, Germany had already joined NATO, and we had a military mission there—pretty good people, too. And we were trying to help the German build up. The Russians, of course, were there. And there were lots of spies over from East Germany and we always worried about that. The Germans were working with us in economic matters, and this was the time of the—

Q: Wirtschaftswunder.

TRIMBLE: Wirtschaftswunder, yes.

Q: Started in 1948, currency changes.

TRIMBLE: Yes. And they were coming along very well, and there was really and truly a democratic feeling in Germany in the Bundestag, and the other people I worked with. Von Brentano was the Foreign Minister, a very good man.

Q: Von Brentano, is it?

TRIMBLE: Yes. And Dr. Heuss was President of the Bundesrepublik. The people in the Foreign Office were able, most of them or nearly all. We were trying to change the Embassy from a military government, really, the High Commission thing, to relations between two independent countries. And by and large, it worked very well. We had good relations with the Germans. And I liked them, and they seemed to like me.

We dealt with such matters as support costs for the British were in very bad shape financially. I tried to get the Germans to pay part of the costs, the maintenance costs, of the British troops, which we finally worked out. We paid all our own expenses, but the British couldn't. And I had to give speeches around the place in German—my German was fairly good. And really to run the Embassy for the Ambassador was often away making speeches, and at a much higher level than mine. And so I managed the place. I was very fond of Dr. Conant.

Q: Could you tell me a bit about how he approached and what his thinking was and all and how he worked?

TRIMBLE: He was a great intellectual, a very modest man, very modest man, very quick mind, able. But he did not like Dulles and Mr. Dulles did not like him. Mr. Dulles would send his sister over there once in a while.

Q: Eleanor.

TRIMBLE: Eleanor. I knew the other brother who's—

Q: Alan Dulles.

TRIMBLE: Alan, who's very different, but she would come over there and throw the Dulles name and weight around, which was quite irritating. Indeed, Dr. Conant said to me: “She's the albatross around my neck.”

Q: Why was there this antipathy between Dulles and Conant? Was it the difference between the academic and the lawyer?

TRIMBLE: I think so, part of it. And one was a politician, one was not. Well, the Dulles family really felt above all and the gift of God to the nation and world. They were very arrogant people. They're smart. As I said, Eleanor would throw her weight around, which—

Q: Well, this was her bailiwick, particularly Berlin.

TRIMBLE: Berlin, yes.

Q: She was considered—

TRIMBLE: The Berlin Stiftung, yes.

Q: They were the authority on the Berlin problem.

TRIMBLE: She wasn't. She wasn't, but she thought she was. And she raised funds for the, not the opera, but the meeting hall that they call—I've forgotten its name now. They used to call it “Pregnant Oyster.” It was built tilted like that. And she would interfere, and she'd come over quite often and try to tell people what to do. And Dr. Conant didn't like it. Neither did I; neither did most of the staff. But she was trying to be the eyes and hears of Mr. Dulles. Then finally Mr. Dulles got rid of Dr. Conant, and he did it rather meanly.

Q: How did this work?

TRIMBLE: I don't know how. He sent a message saying, “Your resignation will be accepted,” or something like that. That was after I'd been there about six months, and I was very fond of Dr. Conant, and think he was absolutely the right man for the time—mind and intellectual ability combined with his background, his culture, academic standing and so forth, and he got along very well with the Germans. And he played it low key. He didn't throw his weight around as some American Ambassadors can do.

Then David Bruce took his place up. Well, David was very able, too. He didn't know German, but he was very good, and he had the name, and people liked him, too. So I was fortunate having two very good chiefs of mission there.

Q: I wonder if you could talk a bit about your problem of disassembling this occupation bureaucracy which had built up. I mean, I've seen this in other places, but when we go

to places, I mean, a lot of people get very—Americans can get very comfortable villas or suites.

TRIMBLE: Oh, Lord! Don't I know it!

Q: Living very high off the hog.

TRIMBLE: A certain arrogance and attitude dating the military period.

Q: And many of these were former military officers—

TRIMBLE: Many were former military.

Q: And also the professional offices, but people had been officers who had had much better jobs than they could hope for.

TRIMBLE: Absolutely, and better salaries and housing and everything else.

Q: When you're trying to disassemble something like this, and to do it without a major revolution or something that wipes them out. I mean, how did you go about doing that?

TRIMBLE: Well, I'll give you a certain example of what happened. There was what we called the Wristonization Program.

Q: Would you explain what that is?

TRIMBLE: Mr. Wriston, who was former Brown University President—

Q: It must have been Brown, yes.

TRIMBLE: He was appointed head of a commission to examine the Foreign Service, and examinations to enter the Foreign Service, and so forth. He decided that we should take in lateral entries, a lot of people who had worked in military, government and other fields

and bring them into the Foreign Service. Well, some were qualified and some were not, particularly some of the military, because they had been in charge and looked down on the Germans rather than treat them as equals. And some of them were not qualified at all.

For instance, we had that great big mission in Bonn, tremendous—I'm going to say several thousand, I think. We had a printing plant, and we had an expert printer, master printer, in charge of it. But he was Wristonized into the Foreign Service, and he wanted to be a political officer. But he was not qualified for that type of thing.

Well, one of my jobs was to cut down on this great proliferation of people which we had, and fortunately I did get instructions from the State Department approved by the President —not for only me for the Bonn Embassy, but other embassies, too—to cut down on those, great big staffs we had in Paris and London and, particularly Bonn, and not only the staff of the Bonn Embassy but also the consulates in Germany. People were falling over their own feet or other peoples' feet, there were so many. And my job there was to try to cut the numbers as best we could. Some were transferred elsewhere. Some were let out, going back into civilian life.

Q: I was a junior officer. My first post abroad was Frankfurt. I was there from '55 to '58. And all these peculiar intelligence operations that were the CIA, the military—

TRIMBLE: Yes, I know.

Q: All these things, could you do anything about them? Because they seemed to grow up out of- -

TRIMBLE: I don't know whether we had to cut 10%, 15% or 20%. I don't remember the exact percentage. But I insisted that every branch, administrative—we were over-administered—political section, economic section, CIA, consular section, every one to be cut that percentage. And we did.

Q: Because most of these outfits had their own masters back in Washington—

TRIMBLE: I know, but—

Q: It must have been fighting a tremendous battle to do this.

TRIMBLE: It was certainly that. It certainly was. At that time, we were beginning to feel that the expense of government abroad was too great, and we were trying to cut down the budgets, not strictly military, but in civilian or so many civilian type things, USIA and so forth. There were too many people doing too many things that weren't needed. It was done with the approval of the President, and because of that all the other agencies had to fall into line. And it was my job under Ambassador Conant to see it was done—

Q: And Ambassador Bruce.

TRIMBLE: It was done largely before Mr. Bruce got there. And we did it, some through attrition, of course, and some transferred back to jobs in Washington. Some people wanted to go back to civilian life and in private business. But we did it, and it made a much more efficient mission.

Q: Because so many of these outfits were rather free-wheeling.

TRIMBLE: Absolutely.

Q: And doing things which we're still having repercussions, particularly dealing with Germans who probably shouldn't have been dealt with.

TRIMBLE: Yes.

Q: Or because of their Nazi past or in setting up almost futile spy missions in which people were getting caught or and then, of course, there were black market dealings and everything else you can think of.

TRIMBLE: Oh, there was. The black market at that time was pretty well over, the cigarette type thing, you know. But there was some still. Actually many people were living much better than they would at home. They had servants, a commissary, where the food was cheaper for them, and good housing. We had built a housing settlement in Bonn called a siedlung and an American staff club. “In this country,” I said, “we have to see the Germans. We can't all stick together.” And I was able to get some of the spaces in the housing open so that the Germans could move in there. We owned the buildings which were built by Germans, of course, for us. And so I tried to get the Americans and the Germans to co-mingle, if you wish, rather than have a special American colony.

Q: But still, this was really the crux of de-occupying the country.

TRIMBLE: Yes, exactly. And this is the leftover from the military government period and the High Commission. And we were doing all sorts of things which was all right for just after the war, but we didn't have to do now. The Germans should be doing them.

Q: Well, now, you dealt with Comrade Adenauer, who was—I see his picture as Der Alte, as he was known. He was, of course, a towering figure in Germany. What were your impressions of him at the time, and how did both ambassadors, Conant and Bruce, feel about him that you personally observed?

TRIMBLE: I was very fond of him, personally. Ambassador Conant stood a little bit in awe of him. David Bruce got along with him, even though they couldn't speak—he couldn't speak German, but they got along very well together. And I got to know him when I was Charg#—which I was several times—and I have great admiration for Adenauer, a simple man, honest, sincere, true democrat, there's no question about it in that sense, and a great German. And his record, of course, was impeccable in the Nazi period.

I remember one story. I don't know whether it's worthwhile repeating. Adlai Stevenson, Governor Stevenson, came over on a visit, just after he was defeated in one of his elections, and I was Charg# at the time.

Q: That would have been probably in the '56 range?

TRIMBLE: Yes, I think so, yes. And this is probably about 1957 that he came over. The Chancellor gave a big dinner party for him, to which lots of Germans were invited. Adenauer loved German wines. They had about three or four glasses in front of each guest: Rhine, Moselle, etc. Stevenson was on his right, and I was nearby. He'd take a sip, smell it and say, “That's not good enough.”

Q: Adenauer, for the transcript, he would smell the—

TRIMBLE: Smell the wine, “That's not good enough.”

And all the Germans would say, “That's right! It's not good enough.”

After doing that about four or five times, Stevenson said: “Hey, Mr. Chancellor, aren't we going to have any wine? [Laughter]

The dolmetcher, the German interpreter, was very good. When Governor Stevenson said, he'd just been up to Gettysburg where he'd seen President Eisenhower, Adenauer who liked Eisenhower very much asked, “How was he?”

“He sent his warm greetings to you, Mr. Chancellor.”

“And what did you talk about?”

“Well, we threw the bull around.” But the dolmetcher didn't know exactly—

Q: The interpreter.

TRIMBLE: Yes. So it came back in German—I was sitting there—"We tossed the heifer." [Laughter] I told Stevenson about that several years later. I admired Adenauer tremendously, and remember when I left, when I was transferred to Cambodia, and called on him to say goodbye, he said, "Well, I shall see you here again," implying I would come back as ambassador. Of course, I never did. But I got along well with him, and I liked him, and I liked the Germans, most of them.

Q: Well, how did you feel that Adenauer—did he completely dominate the political landscape at that time or were there others? There was Joseph Strauss.

TRIMBLE: Strauss was. I never liked Strauss very much.

Q: And there was Kurt—

TRIMBLE: Schumacher?

Q: Schumacher, head of the Socialist Party.

TRIMBLE: Yes, but he had died.

Q: I guess he had died by that time.

TRIMBLE: Then we had Willy Brandt. I knew Willy Brandt. There's a picture of him here.

Q: He was Mayor of Berlin.

TRIMBLE: He was then Mayor of Berlin. He was a Social Democrat. Of course, Adenauer's party was the Christian Democrats and the CDU in Bavaria which is affiliated. That was Strauss' party, the Christian Democratic Union. But we were able to see both the Social Democrat leaders and those of the party in power as well as the other—

Q: FDP

TRIMBLE: Yes, FDP. And we saw them all, and I'd have them to lunch where they could see one another informally because I was a foreigner. So I'd get both groups together, which was always helpful, and they got along well.

Q: Well, did you have the feeling at that period of time that there was a genuine working alliance between the various German parties and you as part of the Embassy to try to bring Germany into democracy?

TRIMBLE: Oh, yes.

Q: I mean, was this sort of the overriding concern of everybody there?

TRIMBLE: Yes. And, of course, it had started well before I had gotten there. First with Jack McCloy who had been High Commissioner and was very good. But that was in the High Commission period. When Dr. Conant came, as Ambassador, the situation was entirely different. As I said, they admired him greatly, and he was a wonderful person and modest and able, and they really liked him. And they also liked David Bruce. So the relations, I think, were very, very good. Now, I didn't particularly like Strauss. He was able, but I didn't like him very much.

Q: Why didn't you like him?

TRIMBLE: He wasn't arrogant but was a terribly aggressive type. And I didn't necessarily trust him, which I did most of the people. I do not mean communist or anything like that, no. But I think he was too German. He was out mostly for Germany rather than Germany as a NATO partner. I can't explain exactly, but I never particularly liked Strauss. But the others I did. Von Brentano was excellent. The Finance people were good, were helpful and certainly those in the Foreign Office. And I enjoyed dealing with them.

And we worked along well with the military, the German military. Many of them had, of course, fought against us in the war. Their was one admiral—I don't remember which

admiral it was—who was very good as were various generals. They had fought in the war for their country as Germans, not necessarily as Nazis. But they were admiring, you know, of the United States, respected what we were doing, and didn't consider us as an occupying power, which they did of the French.

Q: This stigma, however much had been there, had certainly gone by the time you were there.

TRIMBLE: Oh, yes. Oh, yes.

Q: I mean, this was a true sort of alliance feeling.

TRIMBLE: It was, yes. And we helped them to get a certain confidence, not self-esteem, for many of them had an inferiority complex. They'd lost and so forth and so on, and they were upset and disheartened. We tried to give them some esteem as a member of NATO, which we, I think, helped do. They're proud people, the Germans. And they have certainly in 18th century and 19th century quite a record of what they've accomplished. And we helped try to build that one up particularly in the cultural grounds, what they've contributed and so forth.

Q: You were talking on the cultural side.

TRIMBLE: Yes. We tried to help them. They admired, as I say, Dr. Conant for his cultural background and his intellectual background, academic background. And the Germans were very proud of their own culture particularly in the academic field and music and art. We tried to help them on that, encourage them to recognize what they had done, which they've done a great deal. We had very good USIS people who helped. And I think in our military mission we made a point of getting people in—not all of them, of course—who had some German background in their family, third generation, maybe, or something, and some that spoke German. And they got along very well with the German military.

And our relations were pretty good with the British. The French Ambassador I had known in Paris during the war and dealt with him in the Ministry of Finance—and he was very good. The British were a little standoffish. We worked well with them, but I think we probably did better with the French than we did with the English.

Q: That's interesting.

TRIMBLE: Because of that feeling of jealousy.

Q: It was a difficult period for the British, too.

TRIMBLE: Yes.

Q: The Germans had been defeated and were doing a lot better than the British.

TRIMBLE: That's right. And the British resentment of the United States existed for a long, long time— envy, but a feeling that this English-speaking country has done better than their own and so forth. It's ingrained in the British. We felt that some times in our relations with the British Embassy there, particularly with one of the ambassadors who was not very nice. But, by and large, we worked well together and with the French, too—especially the French.

Q: How did you view the Soviet "threat" to Germany and all at that time?

TRIMBLE: We felt that very, very strongly, because the German Army was just being built. We had troops, American troops. The French had cut down. The British had some troops and the Canadians had a few, but it was largely the Americans. And we always felt that the Russians might start in again.

Q: You would feel quite vulnerable, wouldn't you?

TRIMBLE: Oh, very much so.

Q: You were there after there had been the East German riots. That was in '53.

TRIMBLE: Yes.

Q: But were you concerned that events in East Germany might cause the West Germans to try and do something and then this would—

TRIMBLE: No. No, I don't think the West Germans could have done anything, but there was always the feeling that the Russians—they had overwhelming forces in East Germany, and we thought they might try to push through. Our Ambassador used to go up to Berlin periodically to hold the flag, after all, we had an American sector. I'd go up there also and always made it a point to go into East Berlin, and I know I was watched the whole time. They would follow us even into the art gallery. You could tell it or feel it.

And we felt that the Russians might try to do something as Germany, the economy was improving—the West German at least—and that their economic conditions were better, that the people were getting more self-confident in themselves, and thus the Russians might move in again.

Q: One talks about a window of opportunity, and in a way this was almost the reverse, or at least it was a very critical period. Because Germany was obviously coming back, and it was going to be at least an economic and also a military power. But it wasn't at that point then, and our troops weren't really enough to stop anything.

TRIMBLE: No, never. In other words, it would be, “Strike now before it gets stronger!” And we felt that. Oh, we felt it all the time!

Q: How did you feel about the various parties in Germany?

TRIMBLE: Well, actually the Free Democrats were relatively insignificant. We kept very good relations with the SPD and the Christian Democratic Union. Some of our officers

in the political section would work on the SPD. Others on the CDU, as we used to do in London, some with the Labor Party and some with the Conservative Party and the Liberals. But I could see all of them and so could David Bruce and so could Dr. Conant. And we had good relations with all of them. We had a good labor attach# there working particularly with SPD.

Q: Who was the labor attach#?

TRIMBLE: I've forgotten now who it was. It wasn't Sam Burger.

Q: No. Well, if the name comes back to you—

TRIMBLE: I can't remember who it was. Ernie Wiener? No, Irwin Tobin.

Q: But the labor attach#, particularly in those days, was a very important connection to the socialist side, not only in Germany but in other places, much more than, I'd say, today.

TRIMBLE: Oh, yes, if you had a good man.

Q: If you had a good man.

TRIMBLE: Like Sam Burger was and not just an old trade union type.

Q: What was your impression of David Bruce? David Bruce, of course, although technically a non-career person, was Ambassador to France, to England, to Germany, to China. But you saw him there. How did he operate, and what was your opinion?

TRIMBLE: David Bruce was originally a Foreign Service officer.

Q: That's right, as a very young man.

TRIMBLE: As a very young man, married Mr. Mellon's daughter when Mellon was Ambassador to London, and David Bruce was a lowly vice consul. David spoke very good

French. He had no German to speak of. His wife could. She was a very charming woman. He was highly intelligent, politically astute, knowledgeable in foreign affairs and attractive personality but cold. I admired David Bruce and his ability and so forth and think he liked me, but I never had the same affection for him as I did for his predecessor—although he was from Baltimore and we went to the same school and college and that type of thing, and our families knew each other. Very able, there's no question about it. But of the two, I preferred Dr. Conant. But he was very good and he had the ear of the President and the Secretary of State, which is more than Dr. Conant had.

And then he had done very well in Paris, and while he was a Francophile, that didn't hurt him much in Germany. He dealt with a broad brush. He wasn't interested in administration of the Embassy. He left that to me and dealt mostly with political and economic matters and that type of thing, and especially Berlin which was always a problem. I admired him greatly for his ability and liked him, but there was a certain—he was not easily approached—he had a certain reserve in his manner, which wasn't from shyness or anything like that, but he was just that way. His wife wasn't. Both had charm, but David's could be turned on and off.

Q: Well, now, coming to your next assignment, you were assigned as Ambassador to Cambodia.

TRIMBLE: Yes.

Q: I have you serving there from 1959 to '62.

TRIMBLE: Yes.

Q: How did that assignment come about? You've had these sudden switches from Europe to Latin America, but all of a sudden off to Cambodia.

TRIMBLE: That was because I had reached the career minister class, and been deputy chief of mission in three posts, and had the experience of being Charg# for a year and a half at another one.

And Bob Murphy, who was in the Department told me, “You ought to have an embassy. You're nearly 51 now. It's about time you got an embassy.”

I said, “Yes, I'd like one.”

As there wasn't much open, Loy Henderson, who was in charge of administration and Under Secretary, had suggested I go to Laos, but David Bruce said, “No, it's not good enough for him.”

Then when they found out that Cambodia was coming vacant Loy said, “Well, we'll start you out there. It's a post that's opening and there's not any others at this time. Will you take it?”

I said, “Sure, I'll take it.” And I had French, which helped. And so I went to Cambodia, which was completely different from anything I've ever experienced before.

Q: Could you tell what was the situation of Cambodia? You arrived there in 1959. Obviously, it was a fast-moving situation later on. But at that time, what was the situation?

TRIMBLE: Well, Sihanouk had been King, Prince Sihanouk, Norodom Sihanouk, but then resigned in favor of his father and mother—their picture is up there—and became Head of State, which was something of an anomalous situation. His father was King. He was Head of State and Prime Minister. He really hated the Vietnamese and the Thais, although less so.

Q: Was this his? Or was this endemic to Cambodians, too?

TRIMBLE: Cambodians, too, I think. You see, Cambodia—this is going into a little history—had been a very large country, and at one time in about the 11th century, had owned much of what's today Vietnam, part of what's the Malaya Peninsula and Thailand, Laos, even probably Burma—it's not very clear. It was a very big country at that time, and the Cambodian had great engineering skill. They built the great temples, irrigation canals and reservoirs and roads. They had quite a high culture. Unfortunately, most of the literature has been destroyed.

There economy was based on slave labor, that is, of military prisoners taken in defeats of the Thais, Barbarians or Vietnamese. But then as it became weaker, the Thais and the Vietnamese started pushing, and they're more aggressive. Its military power had broken down and they had softened. The Thais and Vietnamese would take some land here and take some land there and that encroachment continued until the time the French came and established the protectorate of the Southeast Asia Empire, in the 2nd half of the 19th century. By then Cambodia was very much reduced in size and probably would have been taken over completely by the Vietnamese and Thais if the French had not maintained it as part of their Southeast Asia Empire.

And the French did quite a lot. They built roads. They governed the country pretty well. They brought in their language, which all Cambodians who had any education spoke. They didn't do much in schooling. They started schools, mostly primary, but no university or anything like that. But they encouraged interest in the history of the past and especially archaeology. The King was a puppet, really, after the French took over. And they built an administration, and they established a forest and water service, which some of the leaders when I was there had studied under. It was one of the few schools of higher learning available to them.

Then the Japanese occupied Cambodia, and after the Japanese went out, the North Vietnamese and the so-called predecessor, Khmer Rouge, the Viet Minh, they were called, came in and tried to take over and communize the whole country. They defeated

the French. The French had to get out. But Sihanouk, I will say this for him, developed a national spirit, and got together a Cambodian army of sorts, that defeated and forced the Viet Minh out. His was a dictatorship, although having a parliamentary facade. A very interesting man. He spoke very good French. He had attended a lyc#e in Vietnam. That's the only secondary education he had. Very mercurial. Great love for his people; they loved him. He talked to them and he used to tell dirty stories to them and so forth, which I never could understand because he spoke in Cambodian, and he'd visit around the country. Temperamental, highly intelligent, but really not well educated. I remember going to one of his villas, where he had invited me for a weekend. I always like to look at people's libraries and see what's in them, Oui, La Vie Parisienne and a couple of things like that in it, but not much. He wasn't a reader. But he was Head of State. And I used to see him, oh, at least once a week.

Q: He was the person you had to see, really, to get things done.

TRIMBLE: He and the Foreign Minister, Son Sann, now one of the leaders in the resistance. I liked Sihanouk, and I think he liked me, but we often disagreed.

Q: On what?

TRIMBLE: He was playing the United States against China. He was scared of China. He was not scared of the United States. We had a large AID mission, much too big, and we were doing all sorts of things for them. The Russians built a hospital, the French built a port, and we built a road. I don't know how many million dollars we put in that country. Because we were very close to the Vietnamese, that is South Vietnam, he thought we were taking sides and didn't trust us.

Also, he had a French advisor—I've forgotten his namenow—who had been a member of the French Communist Party and very anti-American. Sihanouk used to edit a weekly

newspaper, French and Cambodian, which often criticized the United States. Then he did not like my predecessor.

Q: Who was this?

TRIMBLE: Carl Strom. He didn't like him, and Carl was not suited for the job, because he didn't have any French to speak of. Now, to go back a little bit. There was a fellow named Rob McClintock. Have you ever heard of Rob McClintock? A brilliant officer who spoke excellent French. But he was a prima donna, and Cambodia wasn't a big enough country for two prima donnas, one the Head of State and the other the American Ambassador.

So he was moved and replaced by Carl Strom who came from somewhere in the Middle West. He was an old-country, Scandinavian-American type, and completely different. I was sort of in between. So I got along well with him, because I wasn't a prima donna, nor a somewhat stolid type.

Q: Well, I understand. How effective was he? You had this balancing act. At that time, did you figure he knew what he was doing? Or how did his playing with the People's Republic of China and all—we're talking about 1959 and 1960.

TRIMBLE: Yes. He tried to play us against the Chinese all the time, getting aid from both. And he was scared, as I said before. He was scared of China. He wasn't scared of us.

Q: Well, how did you feel about his dealing with China. What did you see as the Chinese threat to Cambodia at that time?

TRIMBLE: About nine centuries ago, the Chinese had established a protectorate in what is Cambodia now. And he didn't want that to happen again.

Q: That was way back.

TRIMBLE: Way back before the French—

Q: Way back.

TRIMBLE: Yes, it was nearly 1,000 years before.

Q: The Vietnamese are basically the Chinese now.

TRIMBLE: Yes. Yes, they are. Well, the Cambodians are more Indic which is a different race. They're somewhat like the Indians, although almost all are Buddhists. The Vietnamese are Buddhists and Roman Catholic. Also they are quicker and more intelligent than the Cambodians. The Cambodians were the hewers of wood during the Protectorate, drawers of water. The French used the Vietnamese in administrative positions, using Cambodians in the forest and water service. As I said, he disliked the Vietnamese and the Thais and was scared of both. But he didn't play too close to us because he thought the Chinese wouldn't like that. After all, we didn't get along with the Chinese at all then.

Q: Because we had no relations.

TRIMBLE: No, or even talk to them.

Q: We've used them as a major menace.

TRIMBLE: Yes, very much so.

Q: What sort of instructions were you getting from Washington during this period? Because you're talking about a period—you came in in '59 under the Eisenhower Administration, and you stayed on through a solid chunk of the Kennedy Administration.

TRIMBLE: I sent in my resignation, which is always done when a new president comes in. However, Mr. Kennedy wrote that he wanted me to stay on, which I did. And so I stayed another year under Kennedy. But, by this time, I'd been there almost three and a half years

and living conditions, health conditions, were not very good. Our children were home in school, of course.

I remember that the first year I was there, 30 members of the staff—roughly 30, including wives and children—had to be medically evacuated from the AID mission, which was very large; the Embassy, which was much smaller; USIA and military mission, for malaria, dysentery, all sorts of things. The second year, about 30 more people. And I thought in the third year, “My Lord! It's going to hit me next or, worse, my wife.” So I asked to be transferred, and they finally did.

Q: Well, let's go back to this. While you were there, though, Laos became a tremendous focal point because it was a period of Laos, of course, but it seemed like the Soviets and the United States and China all were coming together in Indochina, but particularly in Laos at that time.

TRIMBLE: Particularly in Laos with China.

Q: And how did that impact on you?

TRIMBLE: Well, Laos, of course, is a much smaller country and less advanced than Cambodia. We tried to bring about some sort of a political settlement in Laos. Our Ambassador was working hard on it there, and we saw all his messages back and forth. Governor Harriman also went to see about it, and I worked with him when he came to Cambodia. We particularly wanted to diminish the Chinese influence in Laos, which we couldn't because they had a very strong Communist Party supported by the Chinese. But, remember, the Chinese and the Russians were not working together very well.

Q: Well, I mean, did we see it at that time?

TRIMBLE: Yes.

Q: Did we see that there were those—

TRIMBLE: Friction between them? Yes.

Q: For some time we looked upon this as being pretty much a monolithic block.

TRIMBLE: We did look upon it as a monolithic block, but actually when you got down to a little place like that, you can see the differences between them.

Q: Well, how did you see it?

TRIMBLE: The Chinese are much more subtle in their dealings than the Soviets. Russia is a little heavy-handed, demanding. And we didn't have any real intelligence on either group, what's happening in their embassies. We tried to, but we didn't have much success. The Russians were backing the Vietnamese, the Ho Chi Minh group, as also were the Chinese but not to the same extent, and they resented the greater Soviet role. There was a difference between them you see, on Vietnam, and that flowed over into Cambodia, too.

But the direct question was Vietnam, and the Russians, particularly working to get South Vietnam away from us and establish a sphere of influence. We sensed some friction, but I never could pinpoint it exactly, because we didn't know enough about the relations between the two.

Q: Well, speaking about the intelligence operations, later on that whole area became a hotbed of CIA activity. How was it at that time? This is an unclassified interview, but almost everything that's happened has been disclosed. But how did you view the CIA?

TRIMBLE: I'll tell you, since you ask that question—my voice is starting to go out on me—while on home leave before going to Cambodia, I was in the Department for briefings and so forth. The CIA liaison officer for Southeast Asia called to see me on “a very important matter.” On the assumption that Sihanouk was becoming pro-commie and

particularly pro-Chinese—which he wasn't—the CIA Station Chief in Phnom Penh had been instructed to establish contact with Dap Chuon, the strongly anti-commie Governor and military commander in the northern Province of Siem Reap, and to provide him through a South Vietnam intermediary with a sum in gold. Well the central government, Sihanouk's government, got wind of Dap's disaffection and sent General Lon Nol, afterwards President of the country, up there and he defeated him. The gold was found as well as incriminating evidence that it had come through Vietnam and the name of the CIA contact. And all that had been done without the knowledge of my predecessor. He knew nothing about it until he was called into the Foreign Office and given hell, and shortly removed.

As soon as I heard about this, I went over to see Alan Dulles and said, “Look, I'm not going to have any more of that! If I go there, I want to know exactly what your people are doing. If not, I'm not going to take the post. I'm not going to have someone doing things surreptitiously while I'm chief of mission.” He gave me his word, and it stopped.

Actually most of the work of the CIA in Cambodia was on China. Cambodian students would go into China and they'd get information from them and so forth. But it was not so much on—

Q: So it's more almost a debriefing operation.

TRIMBLE: Yes, it was, but the Dap Chuon operation was stupid, very stupid.

Q: This brings up something. I'm not sure if it was in this time or not, but we were having people like Harriman and, maybe, Bobby Kennedy, I don't know. But, I mean, we have all sorts of people who were coming out, particularly when the Kennedy—

TRIMBLE: The Kennedys didn't come out.

Q: The Kennedy people were coming out.

TRIMBLE: Afterwards. Not in my time.

Q: But Sihanouk, I mean, everybody was looking at these leaders and saying, "Do we have a charismatic person who's going to hold a certain line against communism?" Sihanouk, from what I gather, often does not make a very good impression. He sort of giggles, and he looks like a dilettante.

TRIMBLE: He's smart.

Q: He may be smart, but I mean, did you find yourself in the position of visitors coming to you, of having to say, "All right. This guy trots around with a poodle, and he talks, giggles and all that." I mean, was this a problem for you, the appearances?

TRIMBLE: It was a problem for me that Time magazine called him a "tootling saxophone player" or something like that. He did play the saxophone, but that hurt him. And they called him—what was the name they called Sihanouk?

Q: Playboy Prince or something?

TRIMBLE: Playboy Prince or something more—"Snooky." "Snooks," rather. He hated all that. Very sensitive.

Q: How about the impression he made? Were you getting some high-level visitors at the time?

TRIMBLE: Yes. He had a great admiration for President Eisenhower, who had received him when he went over for the United Nations in 1958. He had sort of a "my grandfather" type of impression of him. He liked him very much. And I was with him when he saw Kennedy, and he also liked him very much.

Q: How did that meeting go?

TRIMBLE: Well, that was in the fall of '61 at the United Nations. When Sihanouk had been at the United Nations before he had been treated as a “small potato,” and the press hadn't been very nice to him and so forth. As I was on home leave, I arranged for Governor Stevenson, then head of the U.S. Delegation to receive him, and give a dinner in his honor. The President also received him. I was there and he thought the President was perfectly wonderful. They got along very, very well together. Oh, it was just—I couldn't have been more pleased because it was just the kind of high level treatment that Sihanouk delighted in and sincerely appreciated.

Q: Well, how did the President feel about Sihanouk?

TRIMBLE: I don't know. I think he probably had read some of my dispatches describing what Sihanouk was like. I discussed their meeting in the interview I gave for Harvard's oral history library some years ago. The President turned on great charm, which Jack Kennedy could, and Sihanouk was in seventh heaven. On his way back to Cambodia, he took a train to the West Coast for a stop in Hollywood.

Q: Were you with him?

TRIMBLE: No. I flew direct to Phnom Penh. Oh, I even got a bunch of reporters to interview him at the New York airport. Some of them weren't real reporters at all, but USIS types, but he thought they were. He just loved it. I had also arranged for a special convoy with police escort to drive him from the airport to his hotel against the traffic and all. I mean all beautifully worked out, and the President couldn't have been better nor could Stevenson. So everything was fine.

Then he got to Hollywood. There had been a Buddhist convention in Cambodia, international convention that spring, and one of them, an American Buddhist, from Hollywood and a screwball, got a group of movie stars to give a dinner for Sihanouk, John Wayne and some others. Well, one of the guests, a woman, came up to him, “We don't

know who you are, little man, or where you're from, but we love you." And John Wayne lectured him on communism. Oh! So all this good work President Kennedy has done and everything else was—he got back perfectly furious with Americans and it took me months to get him back on track. That was the kind of thing which would enrage him.

Q: This is the type of thing that we don't really understand the problems. But this, of course, is what an ambassador has to do to understand how these things impact and all.

TRIMBLE: He came back through Japan. While in New York we had been working on him to make a conciliatory statement towards Thailand for he had liked the Thai Ambassador, and the Thai Ambassador had also been at that dinner given by Governor Stevenson. So he made a nice statement only to be informed by a Japanese reporter on arriving in Tokyo that the Thai Prime Minister had said, "Just like cold soup, it doesn't mean anything" That made Sihanouk furious and he got the Cambodians started building trenches in the streets of Phnom Penh for fear of a Thai attack or something. It was just one of those awful, awful—all this work we had done, everything fine and then boom, the plug was pulled out.

Q: You mentioned our aid program. What was your evaluation of what we were doing and the net effect after looking at it?

TRIMBLE: Well, the counterpart funds of our AID program were used largely to support the Cambodian Army. Now, the French had a military mission there, and we had one. One of my jobs was to try to keep them from getting in each other's hair. The French was a training mission. Ours was to teach them how to use the equipment we supplied. And there was French resentment against the United States because we hadn't supported them in the Vietnam War.

So soon after I got there, let me see, it was an Army Day celebration or something around—I forget when it was—May or June of 1959, the American Military Mission gave a big reception, and invited the French. I, as the Ambassador, made a speech, and gave it in French. I talked about how France had helped us in the Revolution and Lafayette and how

as an undergraduate at college I'd been in the ROTC and worked French '75s. And the French loved it. Fortunately, I had a very good chief MAAG, and he got along well with the French, too. So that was straightened out. But it was a little sticky for a while.

Q: Were we giving any other type of aid there?

TRIMBLE: Oh, Lord, yes! We built a big highway for them, and unfortunately it was a pretty poor one. It was built under contract with an American company, and they couldn't find enough stone for the foundation so they used what they called laterite, which is a very soft material. It looks like stone, but lacks the strength of stone. There was a stone quarry about 20 kilometers off the road, but they didn't work it. They used laterite instead. Of course, when the first rains came.

Q: Just sort of sank?

TRIMBLE: Oh, part of it washed away. Khmer-American Friendship Highway. So I insisted right away that they send over the Army Corps of Engineers to inspect the thing, and there was an investigation of the aid to the contractor. Congress also got into the act and some members came to see the road. It was pretty bad. Under another project a team of foresters was sent out to make a survey of the forest resources of Cambodia, hardwood, teak, and so forth. They did a good job of it, but the Cambodians didn't know what to do with the survey. Then we wanted to help them improve the quality of their local cattle, so we got some bulls over, flew them over to impregnate the cows. Something happened, because the semen didn't work. I don't know whether it was the air transport, but the bulls couldn't do their thing. Again we had an agricultural group from the University of Georgia —I think they were some professors it wanted to get rid of anyhow—to teach modern methods. But they didn't accomplish much. But we had a number of very good projects such as malaria eradication, and repair of a great, Khmer Period reservoir to store water for irrigation. The best thing we did was the establishment of a teachers' college and that

was very well done. I don't remember how many dollars we spent, about $120 million a year or $130 million, something like that.

The AID mission people, by and large, were very able, very nice people, very good people. But some of the things we did were useless.

Q: Ill-conceived is the—

TRIMBLE: Yes. And that's true of any AID mission. The idealists and one or two others have their own little thing to push for. It was too bad, because I think AID did a very good job, by and large, certainly in the Marshall Plan. Anyhow, I was very pleased to get home.

Q: So you came back in 1962.

TRIMBLE: Yes. I had been asked in 1961 by the Assistant Secretary for Latin America to go to Chile as Ambassador. I wanted to, but our daughter was to have her first baby in India where her husband was on business, and my wife didn't want to be as far away as Chile. So we turned that one down. Actually, our daughter came home and had the baby in the United States. So that worked out all right. But I'm sorry I never did get the post. As I wanted to go home again, I asked for a Washington assignment for I had stayed in Cambodia longer than anybody else in the Embassy. I was put in African Affairs. Good golly! That was something.

Q: You went into African Affairs.

TRIMBLE: Soapy Williams was the Assistant Secretary then.

Q: Soapy Williams. I have you serving from '62 to '68.

TRIMBLE: That's right.

Q: As deputy assistant secretary. This was a rather famous bureau. I mean, Africa was just becoming independent, and you had G. Bennett Williams who was the former governor of Michigan, who had been named to that position before a Secretary of State had been named by President Kennedy. A lot of attention was being paid to Africa at that particular time. I wonder if you could describe the atmosphere and some of the personalities involved.

TRIMBLE: Governor Williams—Soapy Williams—had gone to Princeton. He graduated cum laude, I think Phi Beta Kappa, and also graduated very high in law school at the University of Michigan. He was Governor of Michigan for several terms, a Democrat, and staunch supporter of labor. He always wore green polka dot tie. Even at white tie affairs. He would give them out on visits to Africa. He was a very nice person, but despite all of his education, I don't think he was awfully bright. Now, this is a mean thing to say, but that was my impression in working under him. He had two assistants: one, who had been Minister of Economic affairs, Henry Tasca, when I was in Bonn, who was a nice person, very able; and another who had been a former Air Force officer, and had served in South Africa during the war.

Q: He was aimportant figure in this whole policy thing.

TRIMBLE: Give me a minute. I can't remember his name now. Anyhow, he didn't know much about the rest of Africa, but loved to go on trips to Africa. Soapy was always having his picture taken in African costumes while on trips. He was nice, awfully nice, really, but not especially well suited for the job.

Under them were the Office Directors and the Desk officers. Most all of them were Foreign Service and many had quite a lot of experience in Africa. One or two had been ambassadors there and they were, by and large, very good. Leadership may have been weak but the Directors and Desk officers were good.

Well, I first dealt with Nigeria, Liberia, Togo, Mali, Dahomey, Nigeria, Ghana and Guinea as Director of the Office of West African Affairs. Then because I had more experience in dealing with foreign affairs than the others in the African Bureau, I got all of Africa except the Congo and South Africa. AF was quite a show. Wayne Fredericks.

Q: Wayne Fredericks was the other person, because he had come up again and again as being— I'm not sure if the term is really correct as an idealogue, but—

TRIMBLE: He was.

Q: But he played a very important role.

TRIMBLE: Oh, he did. He did. And he was also a great buddy of Bobby Kennedy's. He used to report to him all the time, and to several Representatives on the Hill. I've forgotten their names now. But able, yes. He didn't really—very glib, very quick, plausible, but I don't think great depth, at least I felt so. I liked him, but I wasn't too very impressed by him. He was Soapy's right-hand man, and it was a difficult time. Some of the countries were coming out well with independence, but some of them were not. Some were still—well, we had trouble in the Congo, all that trouble, and trouble with Liberia because the President was practically president for life. S#kou Tour# ran a very nasty shop in one country.

Q: Senegal?

TRIMBLE: No, no.

Q: Mali?

TRIMBLE: No, it wasn't Mali. Mali was another one. Guinea. And some of the African leaders were very good. I had to go make trips once in a while. We had AID missions in all the countries. It was hard on some African Ambassadors here, particularly ones who didn't speak English. Some could speak English, and they could get along, but for the

ones who spoke French it was difficult. Some of the people in Washington took advantage of them, caterers to give big parties, expensive parties, you know things like that. These poor people didn't know they were paying too much money. The Liberians had experience in dealing with American entrepreneurs, but most of them didn't. Dealing with Africa was an interesting experience, but I didn't particularly enjoy it. It was entirely different from any other I'd had.

Q: I dealt a little with Africa just a little before this, but there was the feeling now by most the media and certainly by the new administration, that here was a whole brave new world opening up, and all these things were going to happen. Did you find yourself sort of coming from outside the African area and looking at this and saying, "What are our interests here? Let's not get into the hyperboles."

TRIMBLE: Our interests were to encourage the establishment of democratic forms of government, check Soviet influence, economic development, and as a source of raw materials, certainly oil. But I had felt there was going to be what I had seen in Southeast Asia and elsewhere, a strong sense of nationalism. It wasn't nationalism. It was tribalism. That was the major force. Tribalism meant a great deal more in Africa than nationalism. And then there were the language barriers. I don't know how many hundreds of different dialects are spoken in Africa. The only two lingua franca were French and English. One who was fluent in both and in my mind having the ability to become Black Africa's foremost statesman was President Olympio of Togo. Regrettable he was assassinated about a year after I got there. A very fine man, he was one of the truly great leaders.

Kenyatta I admired. He was a great man in Kenya. I also knew Nyerere, but as I didn't deal with South Africa, I didn't know any of its leaders. And I knew quite a few of those in Nigeria. Some of them were very good, and some were—I think one of the best ambassadors we had from Africa was a Nigerian (Ade Martins) who spoke excellent English and had gone to the University of Dublin. And then there was North Africa. That came under the Near East Bureau. But we had Algeria, Morocco, Tunis, and Libya which

was a very disparate and diverse area. And there's so much feeling between North African Muslims and those of Black Africa, for they are racially different.

Q: What I'm gathering, as you looked at this, often coming from outside, when you're not there— you know, you come into a place, you didn't see that really there was much of a role for us except to do what was sort of right and necessary, but it wasn't a matter of great real opportunity to make much of a difference.

TRIMBLE: No, I don't think we could except they looked at us as different, because we'd not been a colonial power in Africa, and, of course, that helped it to turn to us in a way rather than to the French and the British. By and large, I think the French did a better job there than the British—certainly culturally. But no, there wasn't a major role for us to play.

The Near East is different. I never served in the Near East, but it is important, both politically and strategically. Africa at that time was far less so.

Q: What about the concern that we had about Communist penetration? At the time, did you feel that it was serious, or was this just because we were worried about it everywhere?

TRIMBLE: It was serious in two countries or really three, Guinea, Mali and Ghana. And Nkrumah, Ghana's Head of State, was very much under the Soviet influence then. Kwame Nkrumah, who had studied at Lincoln University—

Q: Lincoln University in Nebraska.

TRIMBLE: No, Lincoln University in Pennsylvania.

Q: Pennsylvania. Oh, yes.

TRIMBLE: It's a Negro college. He had a difficult time waiting on tables or doing menial jobs, and he didn't like that. He didn't like Americans at all. The Russians helped him become his country's great leader, “The Sagefogo” as he called himself. They sent in East

Germans to teach his people how to establish an intelligence system which was quite effective. And they wanted to have bases there, and I think they would have had if he had not been killed.

Q: He was deposed.

TRIMBLE: Oh, deposed, yes, and then died. Yes, he died off the—

Q: He was ambassador exiled.

TRIMBLE: Yes, I know.

Q: But, I mean, at that time, we really were concerned about somehow the Soviets getting bases.

TRIMBLE: Another one was French Brazzaville, which is, of course—Q: French Congo.

TRIMBLE: Yes, the French Congo, yes. The Belgian was another one. And there was a certain amount of Soviet influence in Algeria. But yes, we were always scared. The Cold War was on so we felt that way.

Q: Well, I've kept you here a long time. So I think I better let you have some rest. Just one question I try to ask of everybody. Looking back on your career, what gave you the greatest satisfaction?

TRIMBLE: I can't think of any particular episode. I'll try in an indirect way. I've never regretted going in the Foreign Service. Except if I was sixty years younger today, I don't know whether I'd do so. It's changed.

Q: I think this is true.

TRIMBLE: It gave me, I suppose, the greatest satisfaction in doing something—this sounds corny—for your country and helping to bring about a greater understanding among

peoples, because I felt very strongly that we all are human beings. We're so different. Of course, we're different, but we all belong to the same race. I remember an Italian World Health Organization nurse once said to me in Cambodia, “Babies, everywhere they're born, cry the same way, and their mothers love them the same way.” It's a feeling of helping not only your own country, but trying to bring about a better world. That's idealistic, I suppose.

Q: Well, this is what gets us to places like sitting in Cambodia for three and a half years.

TRIMBLE: But, as I said, I enjoyed my years in the Service tremendously.

Q: Well, Mr. Ambassador, I really thank you for this.

End of interview